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# SERMONS

ON

# The Parables:

BY

The Late REV. WILLIAM DAVIDSON, D. D.,

Pastor of the United Presbyterian Church,

OF HAMILTON, OHIO.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON THE CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR AS A PREACHER, PASTOR, AND ORATOR, BY REV. JOHN Y. SCOULLER, D. D., AND A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH BY HON. D. W. McCLUNG.

EDITED BY

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# EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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The following sermons have been prepared for the press in accordance with the desire of the family and friends of the author. All his manuscript sermons were placed in our hands, in order that we might select the number requisite to make up the proposed volume. We were led to select the discourses on the Parables, mainly by what we knew of the unfulfilled intentions of Dr. Davidson himself. A few years before his death he informed us that he intended to publish his discourses on the Parables, and that he was then preparing them for the press. Probably the failure of his health compelled him to abandon the undertaking. The MSS., however, contain hints for the guidance of a publisher or editor, showing that the author had thought of a posthumous publication. We have been cheered in the drudgery of editorial work, by the consideration that we were but carrying out the wishes of a highly esteemed, but departed friend.

Dr. Davidson re-wrote six sermons for the press, numbered in the following series as XIII., XIV., XV., XX., XXIII. and XXIV., and though we re-copied them, they are here published just as he left them, excepting such corrections as an author would make in a final revision of his own manuscript.

In preparing the other twenty sermons for publication, we have necessarily made some changes, and we deem it proper to state what these are. We have occasionally omitted single words, parts of sentences, and, though very seldom, whole sentences. We have occasionally exchanged words for others, and reconstructed sentences. Sometimes we have had to develop a figure which was merely noted in the MS. We have written out small portions of a few of the sermons from the author's notes.

Yet the changes we have made do not affect the integrity, or peculiarities even, of the language. We have copied page after page

from his MSS. without making any change whatever. We can assure the reader that these sermons as published are Dr. Davidson's. The most of the language is his own, and if there is in all these sermons a single idea that is not expressed or noted in his MSS., we are not aware of it. Our desire and endeavor have been to make only such changes (so far as we have made any) as he would have made, had he been re-writing his own sermons for the press.

There are very few statements in these sermons from which we dissent; but of course we do not approve of every idea presented in them. In a few instances we have indicated our dissent in marginal notes. We have inserted also in marginal notes a few explanations for the benefit of unlearned readers. The marginal notes that are without signature are the author's.

The arrangement of these sermons in the order in which they appear is the work of the editor. The MSS. contain no hint of the author's wishes or judgment in regard to this matter.

On some of the Parables, Friend at Midnight, Lost Sheep, Lost Piece of Money, and others, the author left no discourses; at least none have been discovered among his MSS. The sermons on the Parable of the Pounds are little more than skeletons. The latter part of the sermon on the Parable of the Prodigal Son is also a skeleton. We could not write out these sermons in full without inserting much of our own composition.

The sketch of Dr. Davidson's life, and the essay on his character as a preacher, pastor, and orator, were both written by men well acquainted with his habits, style, attainments and modes of thought; the one having sat during many years under his ministry, and the other having been many years his co-presbyter and intimate friend.

We would remind the reader that he need not expect to find these printed sermons by any means equal to the author's spoken ones. Not only the charm and power of the living speaker, but also the sudden flashes of thought, struck out in the excitement and heat of delivery, are wanting.

The six sermons referred to above, as having been written out by the author himself for publication, may be regarded as being in thought, style and finish what he intended all his published sermons on the Parables should be, had his life and health been spared.

EDITOR.

# Dr. Davidson as a Preacher, Orator, and Pastor.

With great pleasure I learn of the purpose to publish a volume of sermons of the late William Davidson, D.D. I wish to bear my humble testimony of him, as a preacher, orator, and pastor.

In April, 1848, he was received as a member of the First Associate Reformed Presbytery of Ohio. From that time until his death, in July, 1875, we were co-presbyters, and inseparable friends. I ought then to know him; but who could know Dr. Davidson in twenty-seven years, any more than a person can tell what figure or colors the next turn of the kaleidoscope will present? Still I may give my impressions of him, and then quarrel with no one who may differ with me in opinion.

As a preacher, he was thoroughly furnished for his work; well read in the Scriptures, and able to quote, at pleasure, from any part of them. He had a large and varied library; was a great reader, quick of perception and understanding, and had a very retentive memory; hence the resources from which he had to draw. His topics of discussion

were selected from all parts of the Word, doctrinal and practical, and his mode of discussion, argumentative or hortatory, as the subject might require; rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to all a portion in due season.

All classes, learned and unlearned, listened to him with eager pleasure, for there was food for each one. He was well versed in all the ancient and modern phases of infidelity, and grappled them with the power of a giant. Perhaps he spent too much time and study, in the latter years of his ministry, in preaching on the scientific objections to Christianity. Many of his hearers would not understand, and could not be expected to do more than wonder and admire, though his congregation was above the average in intelligence.

His power and success, as a preacher, lay in his great skill or ability in preaching Christ crucified for the sins of men; there, at le st, I admired him far more than when he was making his most learned and labored efforts amid the plaudits of thousands. One so ardent in his feelings, and so quick in thought, and so rapid in his utterance, could not but sometimes go to excess or extravagance; and this was more perceptible in the Doctor as a preacher on great public occasions, than it was in the quiet of home. He would have been more or less than human, if he had not been flattered by the applause he received from the crowds following to hear him preach, when in some of our cities attending church courts.

Imagine a minister rising to preach to a crowded

house, whom he knew came especially to hear him. Would he not think now I must do my best? And the *Spirit* would *let* him. He might say extravagant things if he chose. The same man, under other circumstances, not tempted by the applause of men, feeling only, I am an ambassador of Christ, and "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel," will have the presence and assistance of the Spirit to keep him from all excess. Dr. Davidson was most admired and loved as a preacher when he had little or no preparation, and when his whole soul was filled with his subject, and every thought and word came bubbling up fresh and warm from a heart which could not exaggerate the love and grace and mercy of God, as exhibited in the gospel. While he wrote much, he was largely an extemporaneous speaker, and many of his best thoughts were never written, and will never be published.

As an orator, what shall I say of him? Above the average height of men, straight as an arrow, hair black as the raven, an eye of the same color, with a range of expression from the fiercest glare of the tiger to a softness which the gazelle might have envied; a voice of great compass and power, from the loudest thunder tones to the softest whisper; eye and voice ever changing with the subject, or the orator's feeling.

There was a magic in his presence; a magic in his eye; a magic in his voice; a magic in his every action, aye, even in his occasional uncouth gestures. As his nature varied in every mood, so his style of oratory varied. Sometimes, like a mighty, rushing,

rock-bound torrent, he would cause the hearer to stand, spellbound and breathless on the brink, as he listened to the rush of the current, bounding from angle to angle, and only breathe freely again when the torrent reached the placid lake. Again, he would be low, soft, gentle,

"Mild as when Zephyrus on Flora breathes."

His imagination would sometimes outstrip his logic. His powers of pathos and invective were alike unbounded. Often verbose, sometimes a perfect plethora of adjectives and alliterations, as though he shook them off from the tips of his fingers, for you could hardly suppose even so facile a tongue as his could utter so many in one breath. He often dealt in hyperbole, and no wonder that he did, when we think of his ardor and impetuosity, his varied learning, which ranged over time and space, from creation's dawn to the farthest star that twinkles on the verge of space. Pardon me, gentle reader, it would drive the dullest man into hyperbole when he thinks of Dr. Davidson as an orator, whose like we shall not soon see again.

As a pastor, he was faithful in the discharge of his duty up to the time of his failure of health. Unselfish and impartial in his pastoral labors, the homes of the rich and the abodes of the poor were alike to him; aye, even the hovels of squalid misery had light and cheer in them, from his presence and sympathetic words and prayers.

His greatness was seen and felt in the halls of debate, or in the pulpit, where he held multitudes

entranced. But his goodness was best seen and most felt in his pastoral work. He had a kind, warm, loving heart, and was full of sympathy, and appeared best at the bedside of the sick or by the coffin of the dead. The rich admired him, but the poor loved him. His tall form was sometimes seen walking by the side of a poor widow, as she followed a husband's remains to the grave, comforting her with the story of a *lost* Eden and a *found* Paradise.

We claim not for him perfection; but that he tried to be faithful in visiting the sick, in instructing the ignorant, reproving the wayward. The comforts he gave to others on a bed of death, he desired for himself in the evening of his life. Seeing him often in his last sickness, it was perceptible that he did not have all the joy of salvation that he desired; but as the body grew weaker the spirit grew stronger, faith asserted its power; and while there was no extatic triumph, there was the calm, clear, assurance of faith and hope, which gave sad, sorrowing friends strength to watch those loving eyes darkening in death; believing that the freed spirit would soon dwell in that light which comes from the glory of God and the Lamb.

Farewell, brother beloved—a sinner saved by grace.

J. Y. Scoulle.

# Biographical Sketch.

William Davidson was born October 2, 1817, in Brooke County, West Virginia, and died in Hamilton, Ohio, July 21, 1875, in the 58th year of his age.

His early years were spent at the home of his parents, where he had the advantage of a thorough and conscientious family training, a school more effective in developing character and talents than all the institutions that have been or can be reared by State liberality or private munificence.

At the age of thirteen, or thereabouts, he was sent to a preparatory school, at Liberty, Pennsylvania, from which, at the age of fifteen, he was sent to Franklin College, New Athens, Ohio, where he pursued his studies during the four succeeding years. Among his college associates were Hon. John A. Bingham, Rev. Elijah McCoy, Rev. Drs. Black, James Brown, Vincent, and others of name in the Church.

He pursued his theological studies at home, under the direction of the Rev. J. O. Neal, of the Reformed Dissenting Church, pastor at Short Creek,

West Virginia. His studies were confined to the Bible and a few of the best works, written simply to explain and illustrate its teachings. At this time he acquired, in good part, that wonderful store of biblical quotation that so enriched his preaching.

He was licensed to preach the gospel by the Presbytery of the Reformed Dissenters in 1840, at a meeting held in the old "Tent Church," near the place of his birth. His first field of labor was in Southwestern Ohio and Southeastern Indiana, preaching at widely scattered stations, and, in passing to and fro, holding service in dwellings, schoolhouses, barns, and wherever, by the wayside and beside all waters, he could get saint or sinner to listen to the gospel office.

The denomination to which he belonged, and in which, from birth, Providence had cast his lot, never numbered more than four ministers, and while its membership was limited to this proportion, they were scattered far and wide. It was little in his catholic nature to join with the leaders of that secession in making a cause of schism out of an impracticable abstraction; but it was in striking consistency with his whole life, to remain and work where Providence had clearly placed him until Providence as clearly called him away.

On the 28th of June, 1842, he was married, in Greene County, Ohio, to Mrs. Elizabeth Reynolds, who survives him. He then took up his residence in the border of Indiana, near the State line, west of Oxford, Ohio. He preached to congregations at Vienna, Indiana, at College Corner, and at Car-

thage and Piqua, Ohio. The congregation at Carthage, Ohio, was the remnant of the Mill Creek congregation of the Associate Reformed Church, over which the Rev. Robert Warwick had been made pastor, in the closing years of the last century, and which he had disrupted and scattered, in his strenuous efforts to define the exact line between civil and ecclesiastical authority, and to determine just how far a Christian man may properly go in accepting the benefits of Government and in giving it support.

Two of these places of preaching were, each, about thirty miles from his residence, and the other could not be reached in less than fifty miles. His journeys were made on horseback, and his custom was to preach at places by the way in going and coming. Thus his sermons were multiplied, and multitudes occasionally heard the gospel from him, labors of which there is no record save in the book of God's remembrance.

Finding that his official work as a minister was hindered by his inability to administer the sacraments of the Church, in May, 1843, he journeyed to West Virginia, to receive ordination at the hands of the Presbytery. He continued his labors as pastor of the churches mentioned above until the close of the year 1847. It may be said that this portion of his ministry was most strikingly characteristic and noble. His long journeys to fill his appointments, his constant labors, generally averaging one sermon daily, the fiery eloquence and apostolic fervor with which he proclaimed both the

law and the gospel, his unselfish devotion to his Master's work, all gave proof of his consuming zeal and his lofty qualities. Even at this period his health was uncertain, and his work was done under the constant monition, "The time is short." All through this region there are still those who love to tell of his work and suffering during those years, of his preaching when he was unable to stand up during the service—even of his preaching while lying on a bed. They dwell with admiration upon his impetuous and moving eloquence, the courage and fidelity with which he denounced sin and portrayed the terrors of the law, and upon the impassioned, tearful earnestness with which he besought all to accept eternal life.

Early in the year 1848 he was called to become pastor of the Associate Reformed Church of Hamilton, and in March of that year he moved his family to that place. At this period he left the Reformed Dissenting Presbytery and united with the First Presbytery of Ohio, in the Associate Reformed Church. In this charge he succeeded the revered and loved Dr. McDill, who had labored in the same field since the year 1816. In personal appearance and in manner these two men were widely different, but in ability, fidelity and earnestness they were counterparts. Between them there was always the best feeling of affection and esteem, that suggested the venerable Paul and beloved Timothy. It was the beginning of a kingly line of preachers.

From this date his labors were mainly confined to

Hamilton and its vicinity. His field was, in its area, less extended, but required no less labor. He preached as often and as earnestly, visited the sick with the same tenderness, and continued to exhibit the same fervid zeal and intrepid courage. His long pastorate, much longer than any other in Hamilton, together with the high esteem in which he was held by the community at large, made him the friend and pastor of most of those who belonged to no church. They sent for him in their sickness and troubles, and called upon him to preach at the funerals of their dead. His labors were thus greatly multiplied, but he accepted every invitation, regarding it as an open door for the gospel. Eternity alone will reveal the results of this sowing beside all waters. But we can not doubt that the bread thus cast upon the waters has returned to him in the final and eternal welcome.

His ill-health, too, continued. He seemed never to know the blessing of undisturbed, painless health. Twenty-one years ago, at one time for three months, he did not enter his pulpit. We considered his work was done, and at several subsequent times we thought that the royal summons had come. As a rule, whenever he could walk he could preach, and whenever he preached it was with all his earnestness and power. A few years ago, toward the close of his ministry, on account of ill-health, he was absent from us for several months. When he returned we thought him but little improved. But early in the following winter an unusual religious interest became apparent in his congregation and in

the community, and for three months he conducted services every evening in the church, besides preaching twice each Sabbath! During these services there was rarely a meeting in which his ringing, pleading tones were not heard. At their close more than a hundred and forty persons made a profession of their faith in Christ and united with his church.

His catholicity led him to familiar and friendly relations with all Christians. More and more he came to magnify the essentials of evangelical religion—the atonement, justification by faith, the divinity and headship of Christ, repentance, regeneration and a new life—and relatively to disregard the watchwords of denominations, the shibboleths of parties. He was an early and zealous advocate of the union of the Associate and Associate Reformed Churches, and he prayed and urged that a union more comprehensive and more glorious might be brought about. He did not change or give up any part of his own well-matured belief; but he thought it quite practical and worthy of effort, that those who are children of the same Father, redeemed by the same Savior, guided by the same Spirit of truth, and heirs of the same immortality, should manifest their unity and honor their Master by a spiritual, and, finally, a corporate union. For this reason he was sometimes suspected of want of love for his own denomination and zeal for her distinctive principles. In this he was misjudged. He had great love and zeal for his own apartments, but also a zeal for the whole house of the Lord.

From the date of his coming to Hamilton until

1873, a period of twenty-five years, his life flowed on, without other incidents than those which belong to a zealous, earnest pastor and an eloquent preacher of the gospel. At one time he took an active part in the temperance movement, and was a most effective and popular lecturer in that field. He was an early opponent of slavery, and with rare foresight measured its pretensions and the dangers with which it menaced the Republic. When the rebellion openly proclaimed its purpose, his patriotism, his regard for social order, his love for God and man, were roused and his whole nature enlisted. Said he: "If it were possible I would volunteer and go to the field, and I would want a position where I might hope to hurt an enemy."

In the midst of the apathy that preceded the clash of arms, he said: "There will be war; it can not be avoided." And when the conflict opened, and many were saying the contest will be short and trifling, he said: "The war will be long and desolating, and can not end except with the utter exhaustion of one party." He freely said, also, that if it took twenty years and cost a million of lives the stake was worth the cost.

It was not his custom to bring such themes into his pulpit. His rule was to preach the gospel without much regard to current events in the State. But when he discussed the duty of practicing temperance, or of opposing slavery, or of maintaining the Government, all of which he sometimes did, there was a boldness, a thoroughness and intrepidity, both in manner and treatment, that bore down

opposition and secured toleration, if not assent. In 1856 or 1857, after vehemently denouncing slavery for its iniquity, and its evil effects upon all classes, from the slave to the statesman—a denunciation rapid, comprehensive and stormy—he paused a moment, and then, with the air of resenting an impertinence, said: "Don't tell me that I am preaching politics. I know as well as you what becomes this sacred desk. I am set to denounce all sin, and shall I seal my lips in presence of this gigantic sin?" There was no carping at that sermon.

As a preacher, he was striking, and in many respects alone in his class and in his excellence. His form was towering and commanding; his complexion was dark; his face was strongly marked in every feature; even among strangers his appearance compelled instant and general attention. His eye, black and piercing, looked out from under beetling brows, radiant with the light of kindliness, or flashing responses to the inward thought. In speaking it was most expressive and powerful. It kept up a rapid and vigorous interpretation of the discourse, now full of tenderness, now welling up with unbidden tears, and anon gleaming with indignation. His voice was magical in its range and compass and power. It was clear and penetrating, with ease filling the largest auditorium, and in the open air reaching to the utmost limit of the largest assemblages. It had every tone, from the gentle zephyr to the roaring tempest. In the heat and fervor of his speech his utterance was a rushing torrent. But

his articulation was never confused; his words never fell by the way. He was earnest and impassioned almost to a fault. Sometimes persons, incapable of the continued tension, would from very weakness fail to keep up with the impetuous, unflagging stream of thought and speech.

His elocution in the pulpit was remarkably effective. With no appearance or hint of study, or artificiality, there was an evident and intelligent apprehension of every shade of meaning, and a ready adaptation of tone, volume and emphasis, that carried the meaning full to the hearer. His reading of the Psalms and lessons of Scripture was often a better interpretation than the expounding of other men. Under its revealing power, obscure passages became luminous and transparent, illustration and argument became evident and instinct with spirit and vigor, and that which to the common mind seemed ordinary, or trite, rose to majestic proportions and took on the brilliancy of a new revelation. Texts of Scripture read or quoted by him were often indelibly stamped upon the memory, as the light fixes the fleeting shadow in perpetual likeness upon the passive plate. Who can ever forget, if once he heard, his reading of the simple line,

"Thou hast an arm that's full of power?"

his reverent expression of countenance and tone of voice, the deliberate utterance giving dignity and force, the lingering with increasing volume upon the word "full," and the explosive energy upon the

word "power?" Even the rugged rhymes, and halting measures and desperate inversions, that occasionally occurred in the old psalm-book, had no offense for the most fastidious ear, when his appreciative and expressive reading brought out the strength and meaning. His reading of the lines, beginning

"His name forever shall endure,"

and those other lines, beginning

"Walk about Zion,"

had the joyous and confident ring of conscious security and relentless defiance. In reading a chapter from Romans, or Hebrews, his just emphasis and inflection and agreeable modulation had the effect of a commentary, without loss of time and without weariness. In biblical quotation, in which his preaching was peculiarly rich, this effective elocution was equally noticeable. In his most eloquent passages—passages marked by rich imagery and clothed in a gorgeous drapery of language—an appropriate Scripture quotation was generally the climax both of thought and manner. All his own eloquence was but straining the bow and feathering the arrow. All who listened to his preaching can recall instances of the thrilling effect produced as he lanched his shafts pointed and barbed with inspired words.

We remember him standing at the head of the communion table, turning away and addressing a few fervid sentences to the non-communicants—then, his tall form leaning forward and his strained

eyes glowing upon his hearers, exclaiming "The King of Israel sits at this table." He is asking, mayhap in anger, "Why cometh not the son of Jesse to the feast, neither yesterday nor to-day?"

We remember listening to him portray in vivid colors the results of giving up life to mere earthly aims and enjoyments, closing the lofty strain with: "Soon you will start back in horror, exclaiming, 'Alas! my Master, "there is death in the pot." '" The quotation, so homely and trite, was at once irradiated with a fearful interpretation. The attitude, and tone and countenance of horror, the upraised hands and streaming eyes, gave token of a reality of feeling and sympathy unattainable by the most consummate acting. The temptation is great to linger among these treasures of memory, but time and space forbid.

His knowledge of church history and of the literature of theology and theological controversy was extensive and varied. He had read widely and had a well-trained and retentive memory. His library was unusually large and valuable. He kept pace with the varying forms of infidelity and skepticism. Darwin and Spencer, and Huxley and Strauss, were read, and at all times he seemed to know of the place and plans of the enemy. But his glory and power were in his knowledge of the Scriptures, and his deep insight into their meaning. Before his thirtieth year he had committed to memory the entire New Testament, and a great portion of the Old.

He had also that profound spiritual insight, that

new sense—that can only come of the Spirit of truth, who guides into all truth. Learning and study can not attain unto it. His mental processes were strikingly rapid. His conversations, and speaking wholly extempore, were often as clear, forcible, and as well expressed as if they had been the result of the most elaborate preparation. He was full and ready both in conversation and in preaching. It was rare, indeed, that any one inquired of him concerning any matter of religious truth or biblical interpretation that he was not ready with an answer, full, mature, and confirmed by fact and argument. In the pulpit, biblical phraseology, biblical illustration, and biblical quotation flowed in exhaustless profusion. This wealth of Scripture was, perhaps, the most striking feature of his preaching.

He was courageous both to believe and to speak, and his preaching was evangelical through and through. He never flinched from accepting any revealed truth, and never hesitated to proclaim it in all its fullness. It is doing no injustice to his memory to say that he had little patience or respect for those ministers who profess to accept but are too cowardly to proclaim the entire revelation of God; who preach "another gospel" by omitting the claims of the Divine Sovereignty; who invite to a salvation without an atonement; and who, by their silence as to the law, preach redemption through a divine love that overthrows divine law and justice. He preached no such false, weakling gospel. His whole bearing was that of an imperial

ambassador. It said more plainly than words, "I have a message from God unto thee."

It may be asked how one, so gifted with knowledge and eloquence, did not possess a wider fame and leave monuments more enduring than the memories of his comparatively limited circle of hearers. But it should be remembered that fame is not the lot of even the best preachers, save in very rare instances, and these exceptions in nearly every case owe their posthumous fame to authorship and not to preaching. The great preacher of Cromarty, whom Hugh Miller so affectionately and so eloquently placed prominent among his schoolmasters, would not have been known beyond his own parish, and would have been forgotten even there in a single generation, but for his great and appreciative parishioner. And yet Hugh Miller, an almost incomparable judge in such matters, calls him, "except Chalmers, sublimest of Scottish preachers." And this was written by a man familiar with MacLeod, McCrie, Duff, Arnot, and with the fame and the writings of all the others who had made the Scottish pulpit illustrious, and who, at the time of writing, was listening to the ministrations of Dr. Guthrie!

Dr. Davidson was fond of that kind of popularity, not proud but peaceable, which is gained at the fireside and by the sick bed, which comes from healed or comforted hearts; but he had no fondness for that other popularity, which one of its most most conspicuous martyrs has so forcibly described as "a popularity of stare and pressure and animal

heat, and a whole tribe of other annoyances which it brings around the person of its unfortunate victim; a popularity that rifles home of its sweets, and, by elevating a man above his fellows, places him in a region of desolation, where the intimacies of human fellowship are unfelt, and where he stands a conspicuous mark for the shafts of malice and envy and detraction, a popularity which, with its head among storms and feet on the treacherous quicksands, has nothing to lull the agonies of its tottering existence but the hosannas of a driveling generation." Hence, while he had qualities that would have rendered it easy for him to gain a brilliant popularity, he felt no prompting to such a course. His attachment to the people of his own congregation was so strong that he scarce ever felt a desire to look away from them. "Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not," was to him not only a maxim of inspired wisdom, but it ran strong in the current of his own nature. Like the Shunammite woman, who respectfully declined being presented to the king, he "dwelt among his own people."

His continued and painful ill-health rendered it almost impossible for him to pursue that course of severe and continuous study and investigation, to bestow that minute and painstaking finish that are necessary to successful authorship. Especially was this true, when his pastoral and pulpit labors are taken into account. Supreme above every other aim and desire he set the preaching of the gospel.

As time wore on, and it was sure that the short time was growing shorter, his preaching, both in

its tone and subject-matter, gradually underwent a change. The range of subjects seemed to narrow down to the cross of Christ and its immediate belongings, and there was an increase of importunate earnestness and pleading tenderness in all he said. There were, during this later period, fewer excursions into regions collateral to the gospel, and less reference to the remoter duties of the Christian life, while his gorgeous imagination was more restrained and chastened. His whole effort seemed to be to warn against the sin of unbelief, and to hold up Christ as the only and all-sufficient Savior. It seemed as if time pressed him so urgently that there was no room for any theme but Christ. He spoke literally as a dying man to dying men. His preaching at this time was a warning cry, a pleading entreaty, an affectionate and earnest call to the unconverted, an admonition to his people to draw nearer to the Savior.

His desire was that he might die in harness. But the Master overruled his wish. Nevertheless, he wore the full armor to the last, and did earnest battle as long as his strength lasted.

On the 14th of February, 1873, he was attacked with paralysis. From his he slowly recovered, and even preached a few sermons; but his bodily infirmities were oppressing him. His speech was slow, and his manner greatly changed. He gave up the active work of the ministry with evident pain and reluctance. To live and not to preach was to him a sore trial. A few weeks before his death, he said: "My work for the Master is done, but the Master

does not take me, no doubt because *he has a work to do on me.*"

In February, 1874, he demitted his charge, and, with the consent of the congregation, the pastoral relation was dissolved by Presbytery in the following April. During the following year, with slowly declining strength and continually brightening prospects, he lingered among his family and friends, waiting for the final call, and exemplifying the gospel he had preached.

In June, 1875, he entered the valley and shadow of death, and from that time until his death, July 21st, he lived a painful, wearisome, sleepless, restless, struggling life. But his patience and kindness never forsook him. He made no complaint, nor even taxed the forbearance of those around him. He waited the full measure of his time, not even expressing a wish to hasten the messenger that seemed to come so slowly, until, with the words "Almost home" upon his lips, he fell asleep.

D. W. McCLUNG.

## SERMON I.

## The Parable of the Sower.

MATTHEW XIII. 3–9, 18–23.

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A PARABLE is a serious narration, within the limits of probability, of a course of action, pointing to some moral or spiritual truth. It differs from fable; for fable rejects the probable and teaches through fancy (making beasts, birds and inanimate things speak), and inculcates maxims merely of worldly prudence; whereas the parable adheres to probability, and teaches through the imagination, introducing only things which are realities or may be so. The parable differs also from the myth; for in the myth, the fictitious is set forth as truth and is received as such by the simple, the vehicle and the thing conveyed being distinguished from each other only by reflective minds; whereas in the former they are readily distinguished, so that the simplest never lose sight of the spiritual truth which the parable contains. The parable differs from the allegory in this, that the allegory is self-interpreting, the imaginary persons, whom it introduces, declaring all the while who they are.

All material and earthly things are no doubt the analogues of the spiritual, invisible and eternal, if we only knew how to interpret them aright. The resemblances are often pointed out in the parables of our Savior. It is thus that to the spiritual and enlightened mind communion with the earth and its business constantly suggests things spiritual and divine. Thus husband and wife suggest Christ and the Church; parent and child, Christ and the believer; physician and disease, Christ and sin; sun, spiritual illumination; slavery, bondage to sin; deliverance from slavery, sanctification and redemption.

As to the particular parable under discussion, the place and circumstances of its delivery are worthy of attention. Coming from his home in Capernaum, our Savior was surrounded by thronging multitudes. For convenience he went from the shore to the ship, and taught the people from thence. We have a parable, in the position itself, of the Preacher and the hearers; he and his disciples on the ship, the hearers on the shore at their ease. How often is it that Christ and his people, the Church of the living God, are, as it were, an ark on a storm-tossed sea, toiling with waves and tempests, while the careless multitude are wholly at their ease. But let no disciple murmur or repine, and let not sinners take complacency. Woe unto them that are at ease—to the careless daughters—to the rich who have heaped together treasures against their own souls, who are receiving their consolation, and are in danger of speedy and everlast-

ing poverty. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."*

But consider the place and its surroundings. As Jesus sat in the ship and faced the multitude on the shore, a most beautiful and lovely landscape lay before him. In full view lay the beautiful lowlands, industriously and tastefully cultivated, clothed in green and bloom, and presenting all the pleasing sights and sounds of rural scenery—nibbling flocks and happy homes, playing boys and girls, and old men leaning on their staves for very age, humming bees and singing birds, and busy laborers content and cheery at their toils. Beyond, beautifully sloping upward and away, stretched the blue and wavy hills, swelling aloft. Clothed and crowned with the olive, the date, the citron and the vine, and waving and rustling with the growing corn, they seemed as if clothed with a garment of glory from the hand of God. Away and away to the north and west, the lofty Lebanon, with cedary sides and snow-crowned summit, seemed like a sleeping sentinel keeping watch and ward over the holy city. Beneath and around lay the clear, cool wavelets of the pellucid lake, breaking, on the clear, white sands just pressed by Jesus' feet, with a low impassioned voice, as if they gave an answering sigh of love to the wooing zephyrs, that gently pressed the bosom of the

* Matthew v. 3, 4, 11.

waters. While down to the very sands of the shining shore, and away off to the south, and adown the gleaming waters of the Jordan, there grew, now in trimmed and now in tangled luxuriance, flowering and aromatic shrubs, perfuming the air and delighting the eye. Altogether, the landscape was fit to be the embodiment of one of those gorgeous conceptions of beauty and bounty, which had welled up in the mind of the Uncreated, but All-creating, from of old, from everlasting.

In the midst of such a scene as this, and all inspired by it, with the perishing, immortal multitudes of hearers before him on the shore, his heart all aglow with sympathy and compassion, and knowing that many would hear to no profit, but with the gospel sounding in their ears would go down to darkness and perish forever, it was that the Savior gave them and all hearers to the end of time, the warning contained in this beautiful parable explained by himself. Lifting up his eyes from the ship to the shore and beyond the multitude which thronged it, he saw, it may be, a sower going forth and sowing his seed in those cultivated lands, which were without fences, and through which ran one of the most frequented highways in Palestine. And from this familiar occurrence, he drew an illustration of divine things, calculated to impress the minds of his auditors with the height of their privilege and the depth of their responsibility in hearing the gospel.

The scope of this parable is to inculcate the needed lesson specified in Luke viii. 18: "Take

heed therefore how ye hear." Its design is to teach that hearing the gospel is a most solemn thing and connected with most momentous consequences.

1. The *sower* represents Christ and his apostles and successors. We say *successors;* for "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;"* and charged these to commit their trust to others. "The same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."† Jesus is a light, a sun, prophet, teacher and guide, and he exercises his office now by the Spirit, through the word and by those whom he has called to labor therein.

2. The *seed* represents the inspired word of God. "The sower soweth the word . . . The seed is the word of God."‡ In both sacred and secular literature, doctrines taught to men are likened to seed. In this parable seed represents, in the first place, revealed truth in general, the whole word of God, the entire contents of the Holy Scriptures. (James i. 18. 1 Peter i. 23. Psalm cxxvi. 5, 6. Psalm lxxii. 16.) But in the second place, the seed more particularly and especially is "the word of the kingdom." (Matthew xiii. 19.) This word of the kingdom is mainly concerning redemption by Jesus Christ. This is the great central thought in divine revelation, and the one around which all the rest revolve. God, his character, providence and relation to us—man, made in the image of God, immor-

* Ephesians iv. 11. † 2 Timothy ii. 2.

‡ Mark iv. 14. Luke viii. 11.

tal, fallen, ruined and helpless—redeemed, under a dispensation of grace, hastening to death, judgment and a state of eternal rewards and retributions—these are the great leading truths, of which Christ is the central truth, Christ incarnate, substituted, atoning, interceding, reigning, effusing his Spirit, calling and saving men.

This "word" in general, and this "gospel of the kingdom" especially, was the theme of the Great Teacher, and is the theme of all successors worthy of the name. Let us ever remember that Christ is both the sower and the seed sown. Just as he is the teacher and the truth, the physician and the medicine, the priest and the sacrifice, the guide and the way, so he is the sower and the seed. Again: let whoever preaches and whoever hears these truths of the kingdom, remember that they are Christ's truths. That man is accursed and shall be accursed and burdened with all the blood of lost souls, who preaches his own doctrine instead of Christ's doctrine, his own gospel instead of Christ's gospel; or, who through fear of man, or from any other unworthy motive, fails to preach the pure truth or the whole truth. You ask too much of us when you ask the pulpit to court popularity by keeping back part of the truth. You ask for yourselves a stone. What do I say? You ask for yourselves deadly poison instead of bread; and you ask us to commit perjury against our own souls and treason against God, to incur the blood of the souls of our hearers, the wrath of God and eternal despair, merely that men's ears and hearts may not be wounded by the

truth. You ask too much when you require that we should keep back, trim or temper down painful truths, and dwell on those that are pleasant and entertaining, in order that your pulpit may be popular, and your audience large and pleased, though no souls should be converted, and none built up in holiness. The seed to be sown is Christ's seed, and we sow any other at our peril and at the peril of all who hear us. Let that man be accursed who will not sow all of that seed or mixes with it the tares of error; and let that people be thrice accursed who would tempt the sower so to do, saying: "Speak smooth things, prophesy deceits."

3. The *soil* in which the seed is sown is the human heart. (Matthew xiii. 19. Mark iv. 15. Luke viii. 12.) By the heart is meant the soul, spirit, mind, conscience, affections. Truth is sown boadcast, like seed, upon the hearts of men, but in every case it depends upon the heart itself whether it will be fruitful. It is in its own nature fruitful, but to take effect it must fall on suitable soil.

By a masterly analysis and generalization hearers are divided into four classes. There were four classes before our Savior at the time he delivered this parable, and there are the same classes always in all lands wherever the word is sown. Probably there are these classes here to-day.

Moreover, this description will often answer to the different and successive stages in the history of the same hearer at different periods in his life. There are the wayside, the rocky-ground, the thorny-ground and the good-ground hearers. Hearer, you

belong to one of these classes. To which one? Listen with attention and application, and you shall know through God's grace. And if you belong to any but the fourth class, then seriously consider, repent, receive and obey the gospel, as you would be delivered from death, and made holy now, and holy and happy forever.

I. *There are the wayside hearers.* As the Savior looked upon that beautiful, busy agricultural scene, which lay before him; upon those busy laborers and green fields, with the highway winding through, and upon the sower casting abroad his seed, some of which doubtless fell by the wayside, and, remaining uncovered, was devoured by the fowls of heaven, and brought forth no fruit, he saw therein an emblem of what would happen that day to many of his hearers and of what has often happened within these walls, and will probably occur again to-day. As the ground of the highway was trodden down so that it could receive the seed; so the hearts of many hearers are so hard and insensible that divine truth effects no lodgment, and consequently makes no impression. The heart has been so passed over and trodden down so hard by the constant passing of sins and vanities, that it has become indifferent to spiritual things. An unconverted heart is Satan's field and highway. In it he has constant ingress egress, regress and progress. The vanities and passions and lusts of earth make it insensible to the things which are unseen and eternal.

This class are utterly dead to God and Christ and all divine truth. They do not realize God's being

and character, and their relations to him. They do not realize their own character or condition or duty or destiny. They never seriously consider that they have souls destined to exist forever, or that God is their chief and supreme good. They do not realize that they are moral agents, under the government of God, and that they must give an account to him at last; that God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world; that he will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil, and that he will reward every man according to his works. They do not realize that they are fallen, guilty, condemned, ruined and helpless, and that they have need of the atonement and grace of Christ. Nor amid the whirl and roar of pleasure and business and revelry, do they ever ask themselves, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

In a word, the wayside hearers are those who are almost entirely thoughtless and indifferent to religion, and entirely absorbed in worldly and carnal pursuits. At home they do not read the Bible, nor evangelical books, with an earnest, candid, truth-loving spirit, nor converse in regard to Christian truths and duties, nor teach them to their children. In company they never introduce conversation on practical and experimental godliness, and if this topic is introduced by another they are silent. In secret they do not pray, or their prayer is merely from the force of an early custom, instituted under the pupilage of a pious home, and they neither

deeply ponder the meaning of their parrot-prayers, nor desire or expect an answer. If they come to church at all, it is with a mind spiritually empty and wholly filled with worldly thoughts, so that it is to divine truth trodden hard like the wayside.

You have come to church to-day; but you have come from custom or to please friends, or to see and be seen, or to spend an idle hour pleasantly, or from curiosity, or from the expectation of an intellectual entertainment, a feast of reason and flow of soul—and not because you hunger after spiritual food, not because above all things you desire salvation. You are not praying, "Send out thy light and thy truth, and let them be guides to me, and bring me to thy holy hill." If you are anxious, it is not about your soul. If you are sad, it is not for sin. If you are in terror and anguish, it is not concerning the wrath of God. If you listen, it is not because you love the truth, or desire to be taught and made wise unto salvation. If you enjoy the sermon, and singing and other services, it is not because you have communion with God in them.

So far as it concerns the great truths of the gospel, your mind is listless and indifferent. Your interest in the sermon altogether springs from the eloquence of the speaker, and not from any deep-felt interest in the things spoken. These are to you stale, flat and unprofitable. You do not understand them, nor realize them, nor lay them to heart.

But most of you do not hear at all. Your minds are filled and occupied with other things than the gospel. When you came, all your care was to pre-

pare your bodies so as to make, at least, a neat and respectable appearance; but you gave no closet-care in preparing your hearts to come and appear before God. You clothed your bodies, but you did not wash in the blood of Christ, nor array yourselves in the robe of his righteousness. Now that you are here, however clearly divine truth may be presented, your heart remains unaffected. Vanity, pride, business, pleasure, lust, covetousness, ambition, concupiscence, fill the heart and exclude the word. These are the evil birds by which "the Wicked One,"* "the Satan"† (the adversary), "the Devil,"‡ catches the word away from your heart, so that it never germinated at all. Your attention is never seriously arrested. Your minds are never seriously "convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." You live only for this life, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

All this is brought about through the malign agency of "the Wicked One." You think you are wise and manly, that you are lord of your own thoughts, independent and free. Alas! you are in the leading strings of Satan, "who takes you captive at his will." He puts these things into your heart and turns you away from the things that belong to your peace. Lamentable spectacle! In the midst of such full, complete and divine light, to remain in darkness! In the presence of so much danger, and with so great opportunities to secure

* Matthew xiii. 19. † Mark iv. 15. ‡ Luke viii. 12.

the great salvation, that you should remain so utterly insensible of both the one and the other! This word of the kingdom is divinely pure, truth without any intermixture of error, and yet you follow the lie. It is firm and certain—every word whether of promise or of penalty shall endure forever—all shall be fulfilled to the very last mite, and yet you live as if it were a dream, an old wives' fable. It is a firm ground of hope at all times, and yet you build upon the baseless fabric of a vision. It is light in darkness, strength in weakness, comfort in affliction, food to the hungry, life to the dying; and yet you turn away to things in which is no profit. And all this through the machinations of Satan. Alas! Alas! And yet you will not be warned. If you could with bodily eyes see Satan blinding, binding, and leading away your friends and neighbors, as willing captives, into darkness, the spectacle would terrify you. It would so fasten itself upon your imagination that you could not sleep. If you could see him thus dealing with you, though sleeping as in the sleep of death, you would be startled from your torpor and cry out to the God of mercy to save you. Well, whether you see it or not, it is so. God, in his word, assures you of it, and yet you are unconcerned. The awful warning falls on your ears, as seed on the hard-trodden highway, making no impression. The devil, by the fowls of heaven, gathers all the truth away from your mind and heart; and that heart, even within these sacred walls, and in this awful presence, continues to be the highway for pride and vanity and

folly, for covetousness, anger, ambition and every evil concupiscence.

Here sounds the voice which ought to awaken, alarm and allure, yet you sleep on. You hear a voice full of light and truth concerning God and Christ and the Holy Spirit; concerning your high origin, immortal nature, deep fall, utter ruin and helplessness; concerning a full, free, finished salvation, offered to each and every one of you; concerning the dark and stormy eternity that awaits the unbelieving and the ungodly, and the glorious immortality that is in store for them who repent, believe and obey the gospel; and concerning the need and efficacy of importunate and believing prayer, and the necessity of a public confession of Christ, and of an earnest and constant following of him in a consistent and steadfast life; and yet all this is to you, as Lot's warnings to his sons-in-law. You hear it as if it were a dream. You are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, that she may not hear the voice of the charmer, though he were most cunning and could charm most wisely. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel"—more brutish than the ox, more stupid than the ass—"doth not know, my people doth not consider."*

And even if you do listen attentively and remember, it is in the service of sin, and only when some

* Isaiah i. 2, 3.

particular point of doctrine or practice is discussed, which goes to bolster up wicked prejudices, or which you can pervert to your own ruin. For instance, if the minister proclaims a full and free justification without works, and through the gracious act of God, imputing the righteousness of Christ, received by faith, not only will the hearts of saints be all attention and their faces all abeam for the consolation; but you may also find the Antinomian attentive and exultant, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and from the doctrine of gratuitous acceptance, through imputed righteousness, inferring impunity in a life of ungodliness and sin. Because Christ's righteousness is sufficient and freely offered, he is content to go without sanctification of heart or life. Satisfied to have through Christ a right to heaven, he is utterly indifferent to being made meet for heaven. Thus he heareth the word, but understandeth it not; for Satan is busy at his heart.

And now, when the discourse turns upon the depravity of man's nature and on his impotency to all good, except through the aids of grace, there is another hearer who bends forward in his seat and listens with open ears and eyes, and with every muscle tense and twitching. And as the argument sweeps on to its triumphant conclusion, showing man's utter inability to good, a glow of relief and satisfaction passes over his countenance. "Now," says he, "I may give up my compunctions on account of religious inactivity and a life of sin; for I can do nothing. I must just wait until God

comes and saves me." He forgets all the while that God is found of those who seek him early, and that if he would receive, he must ask.

Thus it is that on all these hearts the word makes no good impression, and that in many, many cases it becomes a savor of death unto death.

In concluding this part of the discourse, let me briefly remind you—

1. That this heedlessness is something very much under you own control.

2. The hearing of the word increases your responsibility. It will make you better or worse. You give an awful insult to God in thus hurrying away from his word. You may never have another opportunity of hearing it.

3. Your soul is of unspeakable value. Made in the image of God, immortal, gifted with great capacities and powers, it is destined to an eternity of bliss in heaven, or an eternity of misery and despair in hell. God values it much. Saints and angels rejoice in its conversion. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

4. How can you escape, if you persist in impenitence and disobedience? Is there a God in heaven? Can you resist him or hide yourself from him? "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?"*

5. Ignorance of the plan of salvation is willful. You could know and attend to the things which

* Job ix. 4.

belong to your peace. You might seek and cry out for mercy, if you only would.

6. Salvation is worth the utmost care and cost. It is of priceless value. What would Moses, or David, or Paul take now and sell it? What would not the rich man in hell do now to obtain it?

II. We next consider *the rocky-ground hearers.* These are a better class of men than the wayside hearers. Their hearts are not so utterly overrun and trodden down by Satan and sin. They are not so utterly hardened and dead to religion. Upon them the word takes some effect, and at once. They hear the word and "immediately receive it with gladness." (Mark iv. 16.) But they "have no deepness of earth." (Matthew xiii. 5.) The seed grows on a shallow soil spread over a rock. They are moved by the word to religious feeling and action, but they lack depth of character, and are religious only for a time. There is nothing deep about them. Everything about them betrays their shallowness. If they are servants, they serve merely with eye service. If they are mechanics, though their work may have external show, it is not substantially and thoroughly done. It is finished merely to appear well and to answer for the present. And their religion takes type from their character. They do not dig deep and build upon the rock, but upon the unstable quicksand. And so when the rains descend and the floods come, their building tumbles in ruins. They hear with joy. They are easily moved. Their feelings are light and volatile, and effervesce upon slight occasion. Tears flow.

Sighs are heard. Hope and joy gleam upon the countenance. But the conviction is superficial and soon passes away.

There is much in the Christian religion to excite the affections of the unrenewed man. It may stir all that is within him and leave him unrenewed still. There is much in it to excite fear and anxiety and alarm and dismay, and much to excite awe and wonder and reverence and admiration and hope and joy. Sin, a holy law, a just and angry God, death, judgment, perdition—God's gracious character and work, the incarnation, atonement, acceptance, adoption, sanctification—a gracious providence, happy death, a blessed resurrection, a glorious and eternal heaven—these are interesting, grand and thrilling subjects of meditation, and with them the eloquent preacher may arouse, alarm, terrify, melt or enrapture the minds of his hearers—"with terror now may freeze the cowering blood and now dissolve the soul in tenderness." Thus there is in revealed truth that which may move even the feelings of the natural heart; and the man of impressibility and of impulse is moved, often deeply moved, and, as it were, transported and wrought into a frenzy of fine emotion. He hears the law, and he believes and trembles. He hears the gospel, with all its offers, and after a sort he embraces them. He hopes, he joys. He wonders that every man does not do likewise. He is filled with zeal. His soul is all on fire. He prays and praises. He rejoices and wonders. He is ready to perform great

labors and to make great sacrifices for a time.* But, after all, "he has no root in himself."† He endureth but for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, immediately he is offended, and falls away. What he wanted and what he expected when he set out was a religion of constant calm and sunshine—all smooth and prosperous and joyful. But when troubles arise from without and from within—when he finds that his path to the heavenly Jerusalem lies through the sea and the wilderness, and that all the way he must use his armor, bear his cross, practice mortification and endure much care, toil, danger, loss and sorrow, immediately all his ardor cools, all his zeal flags, all his religious feelings evaporate, and he longs for the flesh-pots of Egypt, and returns back again to the world.

"He has no root in himself." Beautiful and expressive figure! The root is out of sight, and yet gives nourishment and stability, life and beauty to the tree. So it is with the Christian. His life is hid with Christ in God. The fountain-head, whence flow all the streams of his spiritual life, is with Christ and in Christ; and his faith, grappling hold of Christ and growing into him, is the channel through which that life flows in abundant and perennial streams into his bosom. For lack of this root; for lack of regeneration, new and divine life in his soul; for lack of that deep and thorough conversion of his whole nature and being; and because he has never truly died to the world and self and

* 1 Corinthians. xiii. † Matthew xiii. 21. Mark iv. 17.

sin, and never truly risen to life in Christ Jesus, the temporary believer can not persevere. His religious affections were never of the right kind.

1. He had not sorrow, fear and anxiety in view of his sinfulness. He was, perhaps, deeply distressed at the thought of the punishment which was due to his sin, but he had no grief on account of the sin itself. He never saw sin to be inherently and exceedingly evil and dreadful and hateful. If he might have his way and escape its consequences, it is still dear and sweet to him. It was not the sin, but only the punishment which was terrible to him. He never abandoned it. It was never mortified and crucified in the soul. He still held fast to his idols in his heart. In a word, he never truly repented. He mistook remorse for it. His repentance even in his best days was a repentance which needed to be repented of.

2. Nor had he any true love for holiness, or for the God of holiness, or for the holiness of the law, or for the sanctifying efficacy of the grace of Christ. He never truly and deeply desired to be freed from the carnal heart, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. He never longed to know truth in the inward part and wisdom in the hidden part, and to be all glorious within. As an atoning and interceding priest, Jesus may have been dear to him; but as a king to rule in his heart, as a physician to heal his disease, as a fountain of spiritual life and love and holiness, he knew him not, loved him not, desired him not.

And as he never knew or felt the inherent evil of

sin *per se*,* or his own exceeding sinfulness; and never knew the inherent necessity, beauty, excellency and blessedness of holiness, and never desired it and never loved or desired God on account of it; so he never truly knew his need of Christ for justification and sanctification, and never fled to him nor laid hold of him aright. His love of God and Christ was not genuine. It was at bottom only a love of self. Self was all the while his idol and his god. He wanted to be saved and to be happy—nothing more; and God and Christ and holiness and salvation were all nothing to him except as they stood related to his selfish ends.

Consequently no sooner is the sun arisen with a burning heat than his piety withers away. He had not counted the cost before he began to build. He had not considered all that was involved in a life of true religion. He wanted a sunny religion, not a sacred one. He wished to be happy, not to be holy. Jesus Christ, as a life giving, sanctifying Savior, he never embraced truly and cordially, from a felt sense of need. Therefore—

(1.) When persecutions come, because of the word, he is offended and apostatizes. Fires, prisons, banishment, fines, and civil disabilities, he had not counted on, nor will he endure them. Unpopularity, contempt, hatred, opposition, loss of social standing, constant and wearying care—he will not endure them—nor shame, nor much loss of time, nor much sacrifice of property, nor much loss of any kind, nor much labor and effort in behalf of his

*In itself.—ED.

religion. When required to do so, soon he is offended, grows weary in well-doing, and falls away.

(2.) Nor did he lay his account for much inward anguish and spiritual conflict. The old stream of worldliness and carnality was never smitten in its fountain. He did not at the outset of his religious course strive in earnest and make sure of the new birth, the new life, the radical conversion, the vital union by faith to Christ, nor receive the Holy Spirit, the author of all life and holiness, and consequently he can carry on no inward warfare against his lusts and depravities. The old fountains of selfishness, earthliness, ungodliness, still continue to flow, and the streams make way for themselves in the old channels or find new outlets.

3. If this stony-ground hearer could hold on to his lust and his religion both, he would hold on to both, and hence the true, evangelical, Christian religion, which will not permit that, has never been popular in the world and never will be, until the millennial Spirit shall be poured out from on high. If they could hold on to their lusts and wickedness, they would hold on with even a deadly and fanatical grip. Witness Pagans, Mohammedans, Papists, and among Protestants the formalists and ritualists. Such are the religions that are popular in the world to-day, that have always been so, and are likely to be, until the Pentecostal Spirit returns in its latter-day glory and power. The great majority of mankind want a religion which yokes God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, sin and salvation, and which allows the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the

eye and the pride of life, drunkenness, lewdness, dishonesty and the whole circle of the sins and vices, as not ruinous to the soul, if only the rites of religion be attended to, and the magical aid of the priests and ministers of religion be secured.

4. But when the sower sows the true seed, when the true teachings of the Bible are presented, it is quickly seen that this kind of religion will not do; that happiness must ever go with holiness; that the new birth, growth in sanctification, denial of the world, the flesh and Satan, the forsaking of all sinful practices and indulgences, and entire consecration to God and his service, are necessary to salvation. Whoever is unwilling for all this has no spiritual life, no root in himself, no real love for God, but only his benefits, no real love for holiness, but only for its advantages. He is at best a stony-ground hearer, who believes for a time, but soon falls away.

III. *The thorny-ground hearers.* Matthew xiii. 7–22. Better still than the rocky-ground hearers, but yet coming short of salvation, are they who received seed among thorns, a class who receive the word into the heart and profess religion, and continue in that profession until their dying day, but who "bring no fruit unto perfection" (Luke viii. 14), which is practically the same as if they remained "unfruitful." (Matthew xiii. 32. Mark iv. 19.)

These thorny-ground hearers are Christian professors, who, though persevering in their profession, yield to the seductive and dissipating influences of the world and the flesh, until all true life and spirit-

uality are extinguished in the soul. There was room in the soil for the growth of either the seed or the thorns. So in the heart there is room for either God or the world, but not for both. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye can not serve God and mammon."*

The hindrances to the salvation of this class are:

1. The cares of the world. These, though tending to secularize, distract and dissipate our thoughts, are not sinful in themselves. To the pure all things are pure. With the spiritual all things tend to spirituality. The very multitude and magnitude of our toils and cares, if we are rightly exercised, will lead us closer to God and urge us onward to a higher walk and communion with him. Every thing ought to lead our minds up to things divine, unseen and eternal, and they would, if we were only renewed in the spirit of our minds. Many of the holiest of men have been immersed in the world's cares—Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Obadiah, Daniel, Paul, even our Savior himself. But that religious life and communion with God may not be choked, two things are requisite—*regeneration* and *watchfulness*. That the thorns may not grow, and that the wheat may, cultivation is necessary. The thorns must be weeded out and the good seed must be fostered. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and

* Matthew vi. 24.

nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction."*

It is always a critical period in the spiritual history of a professor, when life expands into new and enlarged situations, and it is one which terminates ruinously with many. When such a crisis happens, even to a religious man, what new eagerness excites and impels him. He rises earlier, retires later, and his whole man is filled with a new energy. And oftentimes he does not suspect danger until he is carried clean away. His religious energies become torpid, his religious feelings dissipated. His zeal and relish are gone. He professes as before, acts and talks as before. But he is without spiritual life and power, and he becomes unfruitful. He has no time nor heart now for quiet, solitary communion with God, or for the deep and heartfelt communion of saints. He has but little time for the closet. The family altar falls into decay. He ceases to attend the prayer-meeting, and is but seldom seen in the church.

2. Another hindrance to salvation is the deceitfulness of riches, not riches, but the *deceitfulness* of riches. They are deceitful in this, that they promise security and stability, ease and comfort, peace, honor and happiness. If possessed by the thorny-ground hearer, they become his god. He uses unlawful means to obtain and retain them; is often puffed up and ungrateful. They ensnare him

* Proverbs xxiv. 30–32.

into pride, vanity, and forgetfulness of God and eternal things. They entice him into luxury, effeminacy, indolence and sensuality. It is the pagan myth of the old giant buried under a mountain of gold, over again. He may retain his profession and his forms of religion—probably he will. But he brings no fruit to perfection.

If any true Christian falls into this neglect, forgetting the culture of his own heart until it is all grown over with thorns,* then must the thorns be weeded out. The pruning-knife must pass over this tree. It is a painful work. But painful as it may be, he who seeks our spiritual improvement more than our present comfort will purge us that we may bring forth fruit. His wealth becomes his weight, and fire or flood or commercial disaster must strip him; or, worse, the shafts of death piercing his heart's idols, teaches him the vanity of earth, and warns him to seek in heaven a more enduring substance. It was for the good of Lot's soul that all his wealth and many of his beloved ones were destroyed in Sodom.

But, alas! that these classes should bring forth no fruit—that in the midst of all these opportunities and urgencies they should pass away into darkness and perish forever! Almost saved, and yet eternally lost—almost renewed, and yet dead evermore—almost made alive in Christ, and yet dying the second death! And all this from their own folly. The kingdom of heaven had come nigh unto them, and all its remaining fullness was ready to be

* Proverbs xxiv. 30.

bestowed upon them, and yet they remain hopeless, helpless reprobates forever and ever.

IV. *The good-ground hearers.* The good-ground hearer is one who receives (Matthew) or keeps (Luke) the word in an honest and good heart. The qualifications for a profitable hearing are as follows:

1. *A sincere and honest heart*—a renewed heart, a heart entirely changed, and supremely and intently set on God and spiritual things. These qualities are a prime requisite and a high guarantee of success in almost every enterprise. For example, almost any man may become rich, if this is his whole purpose, if it absorbs his whole time and strength, and if for this he sacrifices every other consideration. Industry, energy, effort, economy, time, will accomplish it. Men who choose, by beginning in time, and devoting all their energies, with a single purpose, may acquire almost any science, art, or accomplishment.

It is so with salvation. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."* Our Savior commands, "Strive" (agonize) "to enter in at the strait gait."† There is, however, this difference in the pursuit of any earthly object; the wisest, the strongest, the most resolute and most diligent may be baffled. But those who receive the word into good and honest hearts, and set themselves to keep it, never fail. They are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

* Matthew xi. 12. † Luke xiii. 24.

2. *Meditation.* The good-ground hearers "keep" the word (Luke vii. 15)—hold it fast in mind and heart, remember it, meditate on it, act in accordance with it. Meditation is either passive or active. In active meditation the object dear to the heart constantly presents itself. In active meditation the mind sets itself to contriving. In active meditation the mind conceives, imagines, rejects, selects, and then acts. To the earnest hearer the word often presents itself. As a thing beloved it often comes into his mind. He willingly dwells upon its truths, invitations and warnings, and decides to act in accordance with them. In solitude and silence the word is his friend and companion.

3. *Endurance and energy.* The good-ground hearers are described as "Bringing forth fruit with patience." (Luke viii. 15.) Patience is also of two kinds: active and passive. Passive patience is endurance with fortitude, and may be denominated a feminine q ality of mind. Of this Christian grace we may refer to Hannah and other holy women of old as noble examples. Active patience is endurance with heroic energy and determination. Such was the patience of the primitive martyrs. They endured with the patience of heroes rushing on to victory. The Christian must unite these two kinds of patience.

Patience is content to abide its time. The Christian is often tempted to be impatient with the slow progress of his own growth, and with the slow advancement and deferred victory of the Church. But the Christian is exhorted to struggle against all

such impatience. Says the inspired apostle: "Be patient, therefore, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."* The tide rises slowly, but it reaches its full height at last. The germ from the acorn grows only a very little in a year, but in the course of time it becomes the giant, wide-spreading oak. It takes years of growth and development to transform the child into the full-grown man. Then, "Let patience have her perfect work."† For as certainly as the slowly-growing child in time becomes a man, or the slowly-growing germ of the acorn becomes the giant oak, just so certain will the earnest, faithful, persevering hearer of the word arrive at the stature of a full-grown man in Christ, and in the end be made meet for partaking of the inheritance of the saints in light; and just so certainly too will the Church, through the power of her Almighty Lord, triumph over all opposition and conquer the world.

* James v. 7, 8. † James i. 4.

## SERMON II.

## PARABLE OF THE TARES AND THE WHEAT

MATTHEW XIII. 24–30, 36–43.

(*First Sermon.*)

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### EXPLICATION.

By the kingdom of heaven is meant the Christian Church on earth, not the kingdom of glory. For there are no tares there, and no casting out into the fire. In reference to the Church as the kingdom of heaven, see Daniel ii. 44; vii. 18, 27. Psalm cxlv. 12, 13. Matthew iii. 2; v. 19, 20. Colossians i. 18. The Church is the kingdom of heaven inasmuch as her author, origin, nature and end are heavenly.

I. "A man that sowed seed" represents Christ, the author of all grace and graciousness. Christ sowed from the beginning, but especially under the Christian dispensation.

II. "The field" is both the world and the Church, for the Church shall be commensurate with

the world at last. Matthew xxviii. 18–20. Ephesians i. 23. Daniel ii. 35, 44.

III. "The good seed" represents true Christians. They are the sons of God and children of the kingdom. Here several things may be noted:

1. There is here brought to view a progress of ideas. In the previous parable "the seed" was the gospel of God. Here it is men. The seed there sowed has here sprung up in the soul, has become incorporated with it, has transformed the soul into its own nature and cast it into its mold. The man has become the seed, living and incarnate.

2. That there are Christians in the world is entirely owing to Christ. He "sowed" them there, bought them, called them, gave them his Holy Spirit, sanctifies and keeps them. We were lost sheep wandering far; he sought and found and brought us home. We were dead; he gave us life. We were blind, deaf, palsied lepers, full of all infirmities, enemies of God; he healed us, transformed us, made us willing, dutiful and loving. Let us ever give God all the glory. Wearing Christ's yoke, and living by faith in him, let us ever bless him and glorify the riches of his grace. Let us rejoice in him, trust in him, live on him, and serve him more and more. Let sinners, in all their sins, look to him. He will take them as they are, and make them what they ought to be.

3. Let Christians remember their own character, and act accordingly. They are "the good seed, the excellent of the earth, the hidden and chosen ones, the elect, the bride, sons, jewels, light of the

world, salt of the earth." Wherein does this excellency consist? In the new birth and nature received through the Spirit, and in the new life thence resulting. This great excellency is not yet fully seen by all. But it shall be seen and admired by all, when Christians "shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

IV. "The enemy" is the devil. The devil is not a metaphor, but a person, a real existence. The parable is metaphorical, but the explanation is literal. The sower of the good seed is personal, and the antithesis requires us to understand the sower of the tares to be also personal. Only *willful* perversity can doubt this. Besides, everything predicated of the devil in the Scriptures indicates him to be a person—entering into Judas, establishing Romanism, blinding the minds of men, transforming himself into an angel of light. These are the acts of a person, not of a mere metaphor.

V. "Sowed tares." This is said to be often done in the East and to be a very great injury to the agriculturist. They damage the wheat, and are difficult to eradicate from the ground. The tares were a bastard species of wheat. Botanically, they were of the same genus and family, and, while growing, of the same appearance and difficult to distinguish. But when they are matured, they are distinguishable by a child. Moreover, even the fruit is said to be composed of the same ingredients, but in different proportions and having very different qualities—the wheat healthful and nourishing, the tares intoxicating and poisonous.

1. Observe the points of the metaphor:

(1.) Of the same family. We are all the fallen sons of Adam.

(2.) Difficult to distinguish while growing. So of true and false professors.

(3.) The fruit easily distinguished. So of true and false professors and of religious systems.

(4.) Very different qualities in the fruit. So of saints and sinners.

2. Satan always and everywhere counterworks Christ. So from the beginning, he ever has been, and is, "the adversary," "Abaddon," "Apollyon." Especially has it been so since Christ came. First Christ came, and then antichrist; first apostles, and then false apostles; first prophets, and then false prophets; first miracles, and then false miracles; first angels, and then Satan transforming himself into an angel of light; first Christ's ministers of righteousness, and then Satan's emissaries, transforming themselves as ministers of righteousness; first the good seed, and then the tares. Everywhere and always the devil counterworks and mimics Christ. The Apocalypse contains an awful revelation of the power, activity and effects of satanic agency.

VI. "While men slept." That is, silently and secretly; when least suspected; under the guise, perhaps, of religious zeal. Indeed most of the harm done to the Church has been done under this pretense, and with the appearance of religious fervor. Some of the greatest evils have been brought in by those who thought they served God.

This began under the apostles' eyes and it has been continued ever since. It is not known at what precise time the seeds of the most of the evils that have afflicted the Church were sowed—episcopacy, popery, purgatory, auricular confession, sacramental grace, transubstantiation. Some of the very worst of them began under the very eyes of Paul and John.

VII. "And went his way." Tares need no cultivation. They grow of themselves. So with false doctrines, especially of such as minister to the corrupt nature of man. So, too, with evil appetites and passions in the heart.

VIII. "Then appeared the tares also." Ultimately the tares appear. When they bring forth fruit, then the servants can detect them.

IX. "Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?" The servants were surprised and grieved. We may imagine the feelings of the apostles and primitive Christians to see the evils introduced; and we know our own feelings in view of the sad state of the visible Church.

X. "Let both grow together."

1. This is not to be understood to inhibit all discipline—else Scripture would contradict Scripture—but only rash discipline. Only God can search the heart and infallibly determine the character and state of men, and the work must be left to him.

2. Persecution is forbidden. The conscience is free. Our motto should be, "A free religion and a religion of freedom."

3. There can be no perfectly pure Church on earth. The attempt to secure perfect purity can only do harm, rooting up wheat as well as tares, dividing and distracting the people of God, and often producing a self-righteous, censorious, uncharitable and hypocritical spirit.

4. Inconsiderate zeal for the purity of the Church has often been its bane. Fanatical men do not know what manner of spirit they are of. They have done immense harm—are doing it now. This spirit has divided the Protestant Church. It has prevented the healing of its divisions, and is doing so now. It has destroyed many congregations, ruined the usefulness of others, and impaired the peace and comfort of some. It is usually cloaked with false pretenses, and connected with spiritual pride and self-righteousness, conceit, ambition, and selfishness. It will ruin any Church in which it prevails.

There are always some who must have their own way—"rule or ruin men." If they do not get their own way, they will try to raise parties, create factions, inflame prejudices and passions. If such courses do not exterminate the Church, they will at least destroy its comfort, peace, growth and faithfulness.

How different all this from the spirit enjoined in the New Testament!—the spirit of love, kindness, long-suffering, forbearance and forgiveness—of gentleness, patience and meekness—of lowliness and humility—that spirit which will lead each to esteem

others better than themselves, in honor preferring one another.

Some object to making a profession and joining the Church because there are some bad men—tares—in it. Let them reflect upon their position in the light of this parable.

The doctrine of these verses is this: *At the end of the world, God will, by the ministry of angels, finally and forever, separate the righteous and the wicked, and he will cast the wicked into the torments of hell, and exalt the righteous to the glory and the bliss of heaven.*

There ought to be no doubt and no two opinions about these things among those who receive the Bible as the inspired word of God. And we think there will be none among those who, unbiased by any prejudice or sinister influence, come with an open and a candid mind to search the Scriptures and to receive their true meaning. Rationalism or neology may seek to unsettle our faith, but it will only unsettle its own. Far better would it be for us all, if, instead of caviling at and questioning these great and solemn teachings, we were to live constantly under the influence of faith in these great truths, and address ourselves seriously to a preparation for the great and closing scene. Alas! how many will be found pale and trembling then who now look high! Awful condition! Let it be our care to be ready.

We have so often heard of the judgment and its awful scenes, that our minds have become familiarized and our feelings hackneyed. We hear of it,

and then dismiss it from our minds as we would a fable or a thrice-told tale. We do not retain the doctrine in our thoughts and try to realize it. We almost forget that *we* shall be there; that *we* shall witness it all; that *we* shall be judged and awarded. This ought not so to be. I ought to say to my soul, "Soul, *I* shall see the glories and the terrors of that grand and awful day. I shall be judged. God will bring every work of thine into judgment, with every secret thing." It is not without cause that God in his holy word has lifted the vail and given us to know so much of "that great day." We ought diligently to seek out what is written. We ought to compare Scripture with Scripture until our minds have clear and systematized views of all that is revealed, and because it is revealed we should receive it with a child's docility. We ought to make a personal application of the truths learned.

Let this be the object of the present hour. Let us call up the Scriptures to our remembrance, and try to get a full, clear and connected view, so far as it has been revealed. Let us collect and concentrate our thoughts, and try to realize the thing we know. To do this, let us try for the moment to forget the present, and, by a mental effort, transport ourselves into the future. Closing our eyes and minds to the things that are around us, and transporting ourselves across the gulf of time, let us, through the telescope of revelation, and with the eye of faith, survey this grand and closing catastrophe—a God in glory; a risen and transformed race; vanishing heavens, and a world on fire; the

judgment-seat; assembled angels, men and devils; the sifting and the separation; the final sentence and its execution.

The last day has come. The day so long foretold by inspired patriarchs, prophets and apostles, the day so long expected by the saints of God, and so long derided by scoffing unbelievers, is here.

But nothing indicates its near approach; it comes "as a thief in the night."* It *may* be, for aught we know, that all this, instead of being miraculous, as we are apt to think, shall be brought about by the operation of the laws which now reign in the physical and moral world. But if so, it will be by those silent forces of the universe, whose operations are either not known, or not understood, and therefore are not calculable by us. For if they were known and could be calculated, then at least scientific men could foretell, with considerable accuracy, the time and circumstances of the world's destruction. But the time is one of those things which the Father hath put in his own power. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."† Not even the Son as to his human nature knows the time of the end. It shall come at last, "As a snare on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth."‡ It will find the scoffers bold and confident. They will tauntingly ask: "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning

* 2 Peter iii. 10. † Mark xiii. 32. ‡ Luke xxi. 35.

of the creation."* But the wise shall understand. The saints, weary and oppressed, longing for deliverance, shall know not the day indeed, but, from prophecy and from the signs and tokens in nature and society around them, shall know that their redemption draweth nigh. They shall know, at least the wiser and holier among them shall know, something of the time of Christ's second coming, and patiently wait for it, as Simeon, Anna and other holy and wise persons knew in a general way the period of his first coming and joyfully expected it. Amid the wide-spread and awful apostasy of their day, amid the bitter and frightful persecutions to which they shall be exposed, they shall know, as they shall see the armies and navies of Gog and Magog drawing near to "compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city,"† that those armies shall not enter their city, nor shoot an arrow there, but that deliverance shall come from heaven, and they shall look up and lift up their heads, knowing "that it is nigh, even at the doors."‡

And now the last day has come and brings no sign. The sun shines brightly; the clouds sail as softly; the birds sing as cheerily; the flowers bloom as sweetly; harvest-field and forest wave as gently; hill and dale and sea spread out as beautifully grand; brook and breeze flow on as freely, and lowing herds and nibbling flocks fleck the plains as peacefully as before. The rested husbandman goes cheerily forth to his toil, calculating the proceeds of his industry and skill, and forming plans for the

* 2 Peter iii. 4. † Revelation xx. 9. ‡ Mark xiii. 29.

future. The mechanic is early at the loom or lathe or forge; the merchant early at his desk or the exchange. The man of pleasure is now retiring to rest after the night's revelry or debauch, as birds and beasts of night slink off to their nests and lairs before the morning's dawn. The city's din and uproar booms with growing swell to the clear, blue sky. The bridegroom and the bride put on their gay and glad attire. The eloquent advocate weaves in busy brains, or pours from cunning tongue, his subtle, polished plea. The steel-clad warrior bestirs himself to fields of carnage. The battle-ship trimmed for the strife proudly sweeps forward in her foaming course. "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."*

But suddenly appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. "As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west," so sudden, so far-flashing and all-enveloping, is the coming of the Son of man. Every eye sees him. He comes in all the stormy spendor of the clouds of heaven. He comes in all the glory of his Father. His head and hairs are white like wool, as white as snow. He calls the earth to judgment. He descends from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-

* Matthew xxiv. 37-39.

angel and with the triumph of God. He comes and all his holy angels with him. He comes with ten thousands of his saints. The earth trembles and shakes. The foundations of the hills are moved and shaken, because he is wroth. There goes smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devours, and coals are kindled by it. He bows the heavens also and comes down, and darkness is under his feet. He rides on a cherub and flies; yea, his flight is on the wings of the wind.*

He comes with a shout, and sound of a trumpet and archangel's voice. And what a voice, what a shout, what a trumpet sound is that pealing through the universe! The heavens hear it, and with a agreat noise vanish away. Living and dead, angels above and devils beneath, hear it, and come at the call. Beast, fish and fowl hear it, turn to ashes and are no more. The armies and navies, besieging the camp of the saints, see the far-flashing glory and feel the deep rushing Presence and Power, and instantly the volleyed roar of battle is hushed at its mid thunder. The city's boom is in an instant turned into a wailing cry. The huge oath half-uttered freezes on the trembling lips of him who began to utter it. The debauchee shrinks back and stands aghast, calling in vain on the rocks and mountains. The gleaming dagger drops from the nerveless grasp of the palsied assassin. The shabby Shylock lets fall from powerless hands the gold for which he sold his soul. The cunning tongue of the unprincipled and venal advocate, swollen and black,

* Psalm xviii. 7–10.

has losts its skill. And blooming youth and wrinkled age, and rosy virtue and shriveled vice—all, all stand in mute amaze and breathless expectation, every eye and heart intent.

Nor do the living alone stand in mute expectancy. The dead are raised. All that were in their graves have heard the voice of the Son of God and have come forth—they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation. The sea has given up the dead that were in it, and death and the grave have given up the dead that were in them, and now all, both small and great, stand before God. Vast assembly! What countless thousands of millions! Earth has never seen the like.

And singular and strange appears that multitude—all stripped now of every accident of birth and fortune; none rich or none poor; no lord or lady; no domineering, heartless master or crushed and helpless victim; none high or low; none helmeted or greaved or girded; none crowned or bedecked in fine array; no brow of pride; no leering, wanton look; no simulation or dissimulation. All are upon a perfect level, save in moral worth or turpitude—every eye brightly beaming with high expectancy, or bloodshot, glaring, and wild with horror too big for utterance—each feeling in themselves beforehand, doubtless, the impending sentence of joy or woe.

Nor do these countless millions constitute a moiety of that immense assembly. "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habita-

tions, and were cast down to hell, reserved under chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day," have heard that voice and shout and trumpet peal summoning them; and with clanking chains and robes of flame and gnashing teeth have come forth from the red, roaring bosom of the lake of fire; and now, in the very presence of the awful ruin they have wrought upon themselves and these assembled millions of men, stand, as prisoners of wrath, shivering before their Judge—all strength, all hope, all courage, all fortitude gone.

Nor yet are these all of that vast assemblage. Jesus has come and all the holy angels with him. Angels and archangels, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, as servitors or spectators, are all there. They admire Christ in his saints. They are taught, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God, and all see the ineffable consummation of that mystery which through ages had been their study; and, looking upon it all with awe and admiration, they receive instruction, and are filled with glory.

Such the assembly. But the Judge and the judgment throne! Every eye sees them. Jesus is the Judge. "His garment white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issues and comes forth from before him; thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him; the judgment is set, and the books are opened."*

* Daniel vii. 9, 10.

And now comes the separation between the righteous and the wicked, and this by the ministry of the angels. The wheat and the tares grew together until now. But now the harvest is come, and the Judge says to the reapers, "Gather ye together *first* the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." Or to explain the figure, the Son of man, the man Christ Jesus, now the judge of quick and dead, shall send forth his angels, and first they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, as tares and chaff are separated from the wheat. It is thus that by the ministry of angels, the Son of man, seated on the throne of his glory, gathers before him all nations, and separates them from one another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And what a separation, what a change! Oh! there will be sad, strange sunderings that day. True professors separated from false, saints separated from sinners, wives separated from husbands and husbands separated from wives, children from parents and parents from children, brothers and sisters from sisters and brothers, pastors from people and people from pastors, neighbor from neighbor and friend from friend. There are some who, on earth and in time, refused to join the Christian Church at all, or, being members, withdrew from it, because they said it had unworthy members—tares among the wheat—who now take their sad place on the left; while some of those weak, sorely tried, but at bottom true-hearted professors, with whom they would not fellowship—at last

refined and purified—take their place on the right. Oh, what anguish will be connected with that separation! What a far-sounding wail is that which rises from the reprobate, as by the infallible and resistless ministry of the angels, they find themselves thus segregated and swept to the left—a groan and wail and shriek, harsh and discordant, of exquisite misery and of utter despair. It turns "the cheek of darkness pale," it makes "the knees of terror quake" to hear it. And all the devils, as they stand confronted with this great ruin wrought by their own hands and which is now to recoil on their own heads, shrink and quail at the terrible exposition, and would gladly flee from the ruin they have wrought. But now this appalling thing, heavy as the wrath of God, shall rest upon them and crush them downward evermore. And then the righteous also, by the same ministry, are carried to their appointed place on the Judge's right, the place of beauty, glory and reward.

But it may be asked, How are the angels competent to make this separation? Is it not the exclusive prerogative of God to search the heart and try the reins? And how then are the angels able to make the separation with infallible accuracy? We answer, That the tares and wheat, formerly in the outset so much alike, have now grown to maturity. What once was so obscure is now plain and visible to all. Even a child could not misjudge tares and wheat, when both are matured and ripened. No more can the angels mistake the righteous and the wicked. They differ in their entire aspect. These—the

righteous—come forth on this glorious, dreadful day, shining in body, soul and spirit, like the sun. They have been transformed and become like their glorious Savior and Judge. Heaven, earth and hell discern that likeness. But those—the wicked—wear another form, oh how repulsive and terrible! Truly, they have risen to shame and everlasting contempt—an abhorring to themselves and to all that behold them.

And now the judgment is set and the books are opened. The record of every man's life and character is produced and authenticated in the sight of all. And now that private and individual judgment, which was pronounced upon each man when at death he was assigned to an everlasting heaven or an everlasting hell, is publicly vindicated before all, and to the full and eternal conviction of all angels, men and devils, who henceforth and forever know that the judgment was just.

Next shall the sentence, the irrevocable and irresistible sentence, be pronounced by the lips of the Judge. The righteous shall receive their sentence first. For even here on the judgment-seat he is "that same Jesus still," delighting in mercy, and glad and hastening to reveal it. "Then shall the King," with a breast and eye aglow, and a voice mellow and musical with love, "say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* The sentence being given it shall be executed. For then shall that

* Matthew xxv. 34.

great and bright and blest assembly, "Be caught up into the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall ever be with the Lord."* And as they are caught away, and as the opening pearly gates, flashing in the light of heaven, swing wide aback upon their golden hinges to receive them, what a shout and what a song is that we hear? "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."† That song and shout are loud as the sound of many waters, far-rolling as the sound of mighty thunderings, and musical beyond expression and beyond all previous conception. Once, when God laid the foundations of the earth, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.‡ Again, at the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem, who now sits upon the judgment throne, there was a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."§ But, I think, that neither earth nor heaven has ever heard before such music as now swells out from that glorious and innumerable throng, as on rosy wings, in robes of light, they grandly sweep aloft through the pearly gates. The very heart and soul of heaven's joy and love and glory and transport

* 1 Thessalonians iv. 17. † Revelation v. 13; i. 5.
‡ Job xxxviii. 6, 7. § Luke ii. 14.

quiver and vibrate in those far-resounding notes, and the old earth, like the fabled Phœnix, seems as if it were expiring in song. Glorious finale this! Ye, who have come out of great tribulation, ye, who in a great fight of affliction were, amid tears and anguish, faithful unto death and overcame at last. No more battles or tears. No more outward conflicts or inward agonies. A long lifetime of mortification and crucifixion and self-denial and deep soul-travail, were not worthy to be compared with one hour of this far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

But far to the left, beneath a dark and stormy cloud, the surging, furrowed bosom of which is tossed and laboring with the pent-up elements of that wrath which only awaits the bidding of its Master to break forth in all its infinite fury, there cower and quail the lost reprobates, unto whom it is said by Him whose judgments are just and irresistible, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* And, O my brethren, what a groan of speechless, hopeless and intolerable misery is that which rings out from that utter darkness, as the stern, inexorable Judge pronounces the sentence of everlasting doom. Earth has heard many a sound of pitiful lamentation, since sin blighted it, but none like that before.

It is pitiful to see the stricken mother when her only boy lies in the agonies of death, or the delirious young wife, as she kneels over the coffin of her dead husband, and embraces the lifeless idol of

* Matthew vii. 23.

her heart, and wrings her hands and pours out her very soul in low and sorrowful moanings, and calls in tones, as if she would pierce the leaden ear, and wake and warm the icy heart, of death itself to life again. It is pitiful to see the loving and confiding, but betrayed and forsaken girl, the banned and banished daughter, the hopeless, homeless, shelterless, friendless, scorned mother of a tender babe, pale, heart-broken and wandering afar—she recks not where—over the wintry plains, through the moonless, freezing night, as, pressing that babe closer to her bony bosom to keep it warm, she sinks amid the drifting snow to die. And that infant's weak and hungry cry, and that delirious mother's raving, dying lullaby! oh, 'tis sad, 'tis pitiful. When the proud and venturous bark is caught in Norway's Maelstrom, and whirled round and round with arrowy speed in the concentric circles of the giddy and whizzing whirlpool, until it is dragged down into the engulfing sea, it were sad to see the livid faces of the despairing crew upturned for the last time to the light of heaven, and to hear the piercing shriek of dread dismay as it swells out upon the shuddering air and rings on the ear such an accent of agony as he that hears it will not wish to hear it again. But what are all these, and what are all the other sights and sounds of harrowing distress that our old, stricken, weary, groaning globe has ever heard, all put together, compared with that loud, long, wild, deep, dismal burst of utter, hopeless agony, which doomed reprobates now utter, as they hear the

sentence and sink beneath it, down, down, down, lower and lower and lower, in that "bottomless pit," the lake of fire and brimstone, where are the devil and his angels, the smoke of whose torment ascendeth up forever and ever.

But enough, dear friends, enough. Let us now withdraw our minds from these grand and awful scenes. Thank God, time yet lasts. Jesus has not yet ascended the throne of judgment. He yet is seated on a throne of grace, and graciously calls upon you and me to come to him, and assures all who come of a cordial reception and of eternal life. Let us hear and obey. Let us turn and live. We are great sinners, but he is a great and willing Savior—mighty to save—able to save even unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him. Blessed Jesus, have mercy on us, and send thy Spirit to turn us away, every one, from our iniquities, and to give us life and make us holy.

### CONCLUSION.

1. Christians, the lesson of the text concerns you. Seeing all these things must come to pass, what manner of men ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? Hence learn to be faithful; to resist temptation; to practice self-denial; to mortify your members which are on the earth; to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness. Learn to maintain, at every cost, a warfare against the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life—to be honest, truthful, chaste, loving, gentle, sober and circumspect. Covet no ill-gotten gain,

though you should be poor all your days. Covet and indulge in no unlawful pleasures, though they be as a right hand or a right eye. Covet no honor, promotion or power except such as is clearly consistent with a good conscience, a pure heart and a holy life. Practice no falsehood and no guile, though they should bring you all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. But cherish truth, frankness, candor, honesty in all things, cost what it may. Give away to no malignant or angry passions, no matter what be the provocation. Imitate Christ, who when he was reviled, reviled not again. Become spiritually-minded. Set your affections on things above. Count everything but loss, that you may win Christ, and be found in him. Love Jesus and God in him, with all your heart and with all your soul. Let it be the whole business of your life to do always those things which please him. Never indulge in any sinful conformity to the world in heart, speech or action; but be transformed into the image of Christ. Seek to obtain all the fruits of the Holy Spirit in your heart and life, and never rest content without them. Look to God for all grace and strength and blessing.

Be earnest. Be constant. The time is short. The reward is great. Like your Savior, have respect to the recompense of the reward. Cost you what it may to be a Christian, a deeply experienced and richly endowed Christian, grudge not the sacrifice. These little sacrifices, these short conflicts and struggles and sorrows, are not worthy

to be compared with that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which awaits you. And let me repeat it again, Go to Jesus in all your needs. He will always cause you to triumph.

2. The lesson of the text equally concerns the sinner. It warns him to flee from the wrath to come. Surely you would not wish to be found among the tares. Surely it were infinitely better to endure, if need be, every earthly sorrow than that sorrow. Surely your judgment and reason, and all that is within you, tell you it were better to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye, and give your body to be burned, than to be cast with the tares into hell. Will you then not now act on this conviction before it is too late? If so, I am the messenger of good news and of glad tidings of great joy. You may be saved. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* Go as you are to Jesus. Take him as your Savior. Surrender yourself into his hands for salvation. He will pardon you. He will receive you just as you are. He will renew and sanctify you and make you meet for heaven.

But says one: "I know it, but my heart is corrupt, hard, dead. I can not turn, repent, believe, hate sin, love God, or do anything that is good. I resolve, I try, I fail again and again. There is no hope. I am lost."

Nay, but Jesus is mighty to save. Go to Him.

* John iii. 16.

Look to Him. Cast all on Him. He will take you as you are, and do all things for you.

Go to Him in your sins—He will pardon.
Go to Him in your ignorance—He will enlighten.
Go in your depravity—He will renew.
Go in your uncleanness—He will sanctify.
Go in your spiritual death—He will give life.

## SERMON III.

## PARABLE OF THE TARES AND THE WHEAT

MATTHEW XIII. 43.

(*Second Sermon.*)

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THIS text seems to be very plain and easy to be comprehended. But except those passages of Scripture which relate to God's character, there is no text in the Bible more difficult to be fully comprehended. In order that we may to some extent comprehend it, let us notice what the subject of the text is, and what is affirmed concerning it.

1. The saint, the glorified saint, as he is in heaven, after the resurrection, is the subject of the text. The text does not discourse of heaven, but of the saint in heaven. Consequently, to open it up, we are not called upon to speak of God, or the angels, or the heavenly Jerusalem, or the palms of victory, or the crowns of gold, but simply of the *saints*, their constitution and character.

2. Of the saints in glory, the single affirmation is that there they "shall shine as the sun." Note the language. It tells you not where heaven is, nor what

it is. It does not discourse of the employments, or the enjoyments, or the companions of the saints; but, fixing your attention upon the saints alone, it simply says they "shall shine as the sun."

The constitution and character of the glorified saints are the theme of the text. Let it be the theme of this discourse. But what are the ideas which this language conveys? To answer this, we must investigate the Scriptures; we must compare Scripture with Scripture; and we must think patiently and closely. Otherwise this hour's service will not profit.

I. It seems obvious in the first place to remark that the language employed is to be understood, mainly, not in a literal, but a metaphorical sense. There *may* be material light and splendor in heaven; and, if so, the saints will be luminous beyond expression. Or it *may* be that the thing which we call light has relation and place only in the present state of being, and that the new heavens and the new earth, which shall be hereafter, will be utterly and inconceivably different from the present. On this point I entertain and express no opinion. But however this may be, *moral* radiancy is evidently the idea mainly intended in the text.

(1.) Light, metaphorically used, is *expressive of life, knowledge, holiness, or moral purity and joy.* All this is predicated of the saints, when they are said to shine as the sun. Of this we will presently say more.

(2.) The sun shines with a *radiated,* not a reflected light. It shines not, like the moon, with a light

borrowed from another, but with its own inherent beams. The saints, like the sun, shine in their own splendor—from the inherent luminosity of their own nature. They shine in their own inherent life, knowledge, purity and joyfulness. These qualities abound in them, and shine forth in their radiant beauty.

(3.) If we are to take the figure in its full meaning, the saints possess these characteristics in a far more eminent degree than any created beings in heaven. The sun shines in a supreme and lordly splendor. No luminary in all the heavens is at all comparable to it. And so, we think, it shall be with the saints, as compared with the other holy creatures that reign and rejoice, shine and sing in heaven. Nor let it be thought extravagant to think so—for is there not a reason? Without depending exclusively on the figure in the text, let it be considered that no others have attained such a righteousness as theirs. Others shine in their own righteousness—a creature righteousness, but these in the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, and which is upon all them that believe.* Those are there in virtue of their own merit, but these in virtue of the merit of Emmanuel. And shall not the transcendently superior claims of that righteousness be regarded in the persons who wear it? Besides, the saints alone of all heaven's bright inhabitants have occupied the post of danger, toil and honor, in that great moral contest which is going on between God and Satan for the mastery.

* Romans iii. 22.

That conflict constitutes the most awful fact in the history of the universe, so far as we know. To our knowledge, there has been nothing like it heretofore, nor shall be hereafter. True, there is nothing dubious as to the final issue of that conflict. God will in his own time and way "gather out of his kingdom" (not only in this world, but also throughout the universe) "all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire."* But it is equally true that this contest is mysterious, awful, wide-spread and tremendous, involving the character and throne of God and the destiny of all created beings. The issue will be "glory to God in the highest." Through it, his character and sovereignty will shine forth with augmented luster before all worlds and ages. And as in that contest the saints alone occupy the post of toil and danger and loss and suffering; as they are among the heavenly armies, the vanguard and forlorn hope; and, as they wear the wounds and scars of battle, is it unreasonable that in the coming triumph they should receive a corresponding recognition and reward? This contest involves them, and them alone of all holy creatures, in "great tribulation," and is it unreasonable that they shall enjoy a corresponding measure of eternal glory? Shall the truth imaged forth in the text, that among all the sons of glory, they shall shine in peerless splendor, as the sun among the luminaries of heaven, be thought incredible? Let this great truth then cheer, console and encourage us Christians when

* Matthew xiii. 41, 42.

ready to faint and fall amid the heat and weariness and anguish of this great strife. Let us have respect, as Christ had, to the recompense of the reward, and let us remember that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."* And looking to the great Source of all protection, strength, sanctity, victory and reward, let us in patience possess our souls, knowing that we shall receive this peerless crown of life.

II. But let us return again to the inquiry in regard to the import of the words, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." To have any adequate conception of this we must search all the Scriptures, and carefully ponder what they say concerning the character of the glorified saints. To examine, in detail, all the passages relating to this subject was a work too unwieldy for this discourse. But there is one passage which seems to embody in itself the substance of all the rest. Let us turn to it, promising that to understand it at all will require much thought both in the speaker and hearer. It is found in 1 John, 3d chapter, 2d verse: "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Let us inquire what Christ is, and hence learn what we shall be. Our bodies and souls in glory shall be like the body and soul, the humanity of Christ. This is the great archetype and model after which we shall be formed on the morning of the resurrection. What, therefore,

* 2 Corinthians iv. 17.

does all this import? The words are few, but are full of meaning.

1. To be like Christ implies that *we shall be free from all stain or taint of sin.* Christ is so, and to suppose the possibility of the opposite with regard to him were utter blasphemy. With just reason the cherubim cry, "Holy, holy, holy." And in holiness we shall be like him. Our guilt, removed through his atonement when we believed, shall never return to shame or to condemn us, but is blotted out, and shall no more be mentioned or be brought into mind. All the remaining unholiness of character, which still cleaves to the most saintly of Christians here, shall in heaven be totally and forever cleared away. Even the sun has his dark spots. But there the saints are "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, being holy and without blame before him in love."* The king's daughter, outwardly adorned with the gold-embroidered garments, needle-wrought, that is, the spotless righteousness of Christ, received by faith, and which shall be upon her forever, is also, through the transforming influences of the Holy Spirit, made all glorious within by unwrought holiness. She is holy, as God is holy. Not one impure desire, not the slightest shadow of an unholy imagining, even for a moment, flits across the bright disk of that glorious sun. Now, for the first time, can the King say, in all the fullness of meaning, "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair . . . there is no spot in thee."† No more ungodliness; no more carnality;

* Ephesians v. 27. † Canticles iv. 1, 4.

no more idolatry of the creature or of self; no more unbelief or doubt or fear; no more coldness or feebleness of the affections toward God; but a pure, bright, intense and constant flame and glow of all holy and devout affections toward God, and of all just, loving, benevolent, tender feelings toward all created beings—body, soul and spirit, with all their parts and powers being swallowed up in God, and God all their salvation and all their desire. Whom have they in heaven but God, and what is there in all the universe that they desire beside him?

2. To be like Christ in heaven is *to have a body like his.* Christ was raised, or rather arose, from the dead. The sacred body, which was taken down from the cross and laid in Joseph's tomb. did not remain there, or see corruption. On the third day it arose, returned to life—even that same body—and at the end of forty days ascended to heaven. But though the very body, which had been laid in the grave, arose, it was then and forever greatly changed. It became thenceforth "a spiritual body,"* with new properties and powers. Not much is said of these newly acquired properties by his biographers. But from the little that is said, and from what is dropped here and there throughout the New Testament, much can be gathered.

Some of the negative properties of that "spiritual body" are such as these:

(1.) It is *infrangible.* It can not be broken, or severed, or dislocated, or lacerated. It can not

* 1 Corinthians xv. 44.

suffer a lesion of parts. It remains an integer forever.

(2.) It is *indissoluble and indestructible.* It shall see no corruption, decay or disintegration. In all its entirety it is eternal.

(3.) It is *impassible.* It not only shall not suffer, but it can not suffer. There shall be no more curse, no more death, no more sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain . . . It shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on it, nor any heat.*

(4.) There shall be no weakness, weariness or want. There shall be no old age, with its burdens and helplessness. In a word, there shall be no defect, no blemish, no evil at all, forever and ever.

Some of the positive properties of "the spiritual body" are as follows:

(1.) Being no longer flesh and blood, it could transfuse itself, without apparent difficulty, through walls, closed doors, or other material bodies, as light through a transparent medium. Thus, when "the disciples were assembled, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst."† *We shall be like him.*

(2.) It could seemingly change its form and appearance at pleasure. Thus, his own disciples on the way to Emmaus did not know Jesus, until he revealed himself to them, at their evening meal. *We shall be like him.*

(3.) It seemed entirely subject to his will. It was not controlled by gravitation, and probably not

* Revelation xxi. 4; vii. 16. † John xx. 19.

by other cosmical laws or conditions, as human bodies now are, but was entirely subject to the control of the will. When the time came, he ascended to heaven, by his own volition. *We shall be like him.*

3. The spiritual body will be *very beautiful, commanding and glorious.* This seems to be intimated in the phraseology of the text. The appearance of our Savior on the mount of transfiguration was of such effulgent splendor and majesty as to overpower the onlooking apostles, so that they were not able to behold. At the appearance of the angels to Daniel and John, they were overcome by the glory of the presence and became almost as dead men, and we know that the saints "shall be equal to the angels." Nay, more; we know that the body of Christ is "exalted far above" all material forms that are in heaven or in earth,* in all that constitutes beauty and grandeur of appearance. It is declared in the Scriptures to be so glorious and majestic, as he sits on the great white throne to judge the world, that the heavens and the earth are unable to bear the flood of divine effulgence, and flee away, shrinking, as it were, into annihilation for shelter.† *We shall be like him.* "Sown in corruption, we shall be raised in incorruption; sown in dishonor, we shall be raised in glory; sown in weakness, we shall be raised in power."‡

4. These bodies shall always be young and strong, and full of all agreeable and delightful sen-

* Ephesians i. 21. † Revelation xx. 11.
‡ 1 Corinthians xv. 42, 43.

sations. Such is Christ's body—the happiest and strongest material thing that ever was or ever shall be—able to do anything its soul wills and to enjoy every possible felicity. "We shall be like him." Our youth shall be sempiternal; our strength and activity almost infinite; nothing will be hard to us that is the proper object of effort. "Sown in weakness, raised in power." Material substances will be no obstruction, gravitation no hindrance.

5. These bodies shall be endowed with the powers of rapid motion. The angels are thus endowed. They fly at pleasure as fast and far as the light or lightning. Christ's body is also endowed with the power of rapid motion. When he shall return at the end of the world, his coming will be as lightning. *We shall be like him.* We shall be equal to the angels, perhaps even more spiritual, subtle and fleet than they, and every motion will be a pleasure and a joy.

6. *The bodily senses will be greatly improved.* They will be subject to no accident or decay. They will have unlimited scope. Christ must see all objects and hear all sounds, else he could not exercise universal dominion.

Here our senses are limited as to their objects, being able to act only within certain distances, and in certain conditions. We may have, probably shall have, new senses. We know that matter has properties of which we have no direct perception. Probably its unperceived and unknown qualities and workings are more numerous than those which are known. But however this may be, and however so

many latent and unknown powers of matter shall then be developed, we shall have immediate, infallible and perfect knowledge of them all. Our senses will probably be greatly increased in number, each indefinitely more perfect, able to act infallibly and constantly, not only without exhaustion and weariness, but with constant pleasure and joy—joy unalloyed and pleasure intense and painless.

Thus our bodily senses, when like Christ's, shall discern all material qualities and activities, and be blessed in the exercise. Thus shall we be able to discern the power, wisdom and goodness of God in a higher degree and wider sphere; and thus shall we be fully qualified, as the high priests of the material universe, to render to God adequate glory and praise in *all* his works.

III. To be like Christ implies that our *glorified spirits shall be like his.*

1. They shall be free from all sin and from all tendency to sin. They shall be delivered from all atheism, hatred of God and ungodlinesss—from all lusts of the flesh and of the mind, covetousness, envy, pride, ambition, and from all carnal, worldly and sinful thoughts, affections, desires, feelings and propensities—from the power of Satan and all machinations and influences—from unbelief, coldness, formality, indifference, lukewarmness, and from every defect and imperfection.

2. They shall be delivered from all the *consequences* of sin—from condemnation, from spiritual death, from the wrath of God, from all satanic and

worldly temptations, from all obstructions of the divine favor, and from all ignorance, darkness, fear, weakness and error.

3. They shall be restored to perfect holiness. They will be endued with a tendency and impulse to all righteousness. Such will be their disposition and nature that it will be easy, natural and morally necessary to love God. They will be pure in aim, motive, feeling, principle and action. Fixed and unalterably confirmed in all holiness and righteousness, they can fall never more.

4. They shall be possessed of all the fruits and consequences of perfect and confirmed righteousness and holiness. In the heavenly state they are not only justified and accepted, but publicly owned and adopted. God and Christ are publicly pledged in the covenant of redemption to be theirs, and to defend them from sins, sorrows, death and all enemies, and to fill them with holiness, peace, joy, and all other blessings. Whatever good they are capable of enjoying in body, soul and spirit shall be theirs. And the capacity of the redeemed for activity and enjoyment shall be wonderfully enlarged. Their intellectual powers shall be immeasurably strengthened, harmonized and exalted. To understand something of this, we must consider how great is the human intellect of Christ in glory; for ours shall be like his. Even on earth he could read the hearts of men, and knew the secrets of nature—how much more in heaven? His senses and faculties are able to observe all the objects and movements of universal nature at once.

It must be so, for the Mediator governs the universe. He does it through the human nature. Consequently, that body and soul, as agent or instrument of the divine person, sees, knows and governs all.* He sees, *i. e.*, knows all things at a single glance, and attends to all things at once without distraction, cessation, confusion or fatigue. He knows all fact, all entity, intuitively, without those tedious, circuitous and laborious processes necessary to our acquisition of knoweledge here. And in this too, "we shall be like him." In heaven, we shall no longer know in part and see through a glass darkly; but we shall see, even as we are seen, and know as we are known; for it is thus the humanity of Christ sees and knows. There his memory, recollection and imagination are perfect and inconceivably exalted and active. Every image, perception and sensation of all the past are with the ease of spontaneity reproduced, at will, every moment. And in this also "we shall be like him." Thus we shall continually live the past over again. All its beauty, grandeur and joy, continually present, shall tower and shine and thrill forever, and shall be forever swelled and modified by new experiences. The ever-active, ever-unwearied senses and faculties, to all the glory and beatification of the past, shall add fresh stores, advancing us from glory to glory always. Thus shall the happiness of the redeemed increase evermore, widen-

* We dissent. We think it is only *as God*, not *as man*, that Christ knows and governs all things. Mark xiii. 32.—ED.

ing and deepening, as it flows like a mighty crystal river through the eternal landscapes of heaven.

Nor must we lose sight of the *emotional* nature. All our desires, aims, aspirations and affections shall be perfectly pure and holy, as God is holy. All shall aspire after God and rest in him, as in an ocean of infinite fullness. They shall never stray from him any more. They shall never again forsake the Fountain of living waters, and turn aside to broken cisterns, but freed from the distractions and degradations and conflicts of sin, and from all its fitful and feverish and destructive perturbations, they shall calmly dwell fast by the flowing fountains of God's loving fullness and drink of the rivers of his pleasure through all eternity. Every one of the affections, like the physical and intellectual powers, shall be immeasurably developed and made more keenly susceptibly. They shall be capable of constant and the highest activity, without exhaustion, or satiety, or weariness. All their activities shall be eternally nourishing and refreshing.

4. In fine, put all these things together—the glorified body and soul and spirit—every member, power and susceptibility glorified—all in full, highest and harmonious activity—all adoring, worshiping and serving—all drinking of the rivers of the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore. As all the bodily senses and all the intellectual powers of the redeemed in the paradise of God, among the innumerable company of angels, in the General Assembly and Church of the First-born, and in the presence of the Lamb who is in the midst of the

throne, are continually beholding and experiencing new beauties and glories; so the sanctified emotions, undistracted, unwearied, unsated and all in the full tide and flush of glorified activity, shall ever thrill with corresponding raptures. And as the whole sum of truth and beauty and good, as perceived by the soul, is forever and ever increasing, so shall its emotions have a deeper and a grander flow—a sweeter, loftier, wider, deeper thrill of exquisite, ineffable ecstasy to endless ages.

But who can sum up or conceive the results of all this continual accretion of glory and joy, as the mighty river rolls on and ever, wider and deeper, adown the landscapes of an unending heaven? Truly, truly, it doth not yet appear what we shall be. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived the things which God hath in store for them that love him. The most we can say of it is that it is unutterable. The best idea we can have of it is that it is inconceivable. Truly, we shall be satisfied, when we awake with God's likeness.

Sinners, this is all within your reach.

Professors, make your calling and election sure.

Tempted, struggling saints, press forward.

Afflicted believers, be patient.

Aged, sick, dying believers, rejoice in the prospect of death.

Bereaved Christians, sorrow not as those who have no hope.

Toiling servants in the vineyard, a glorious recompense awaits you.

## SERMON IV.

## The Parable of the Mustard Seed.

MATTHEW XIII. 31, 32.

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We need not detain to consider what kind of plant is here designated, or why the proverbial form of expression that the mustard seed is the least of all seeds is employed. I hasten to speak of the lesson which the parable teaches, even this: first, that the Christian religion and Church, though small and insignificant in the beginning as a grain of mustard, should continue to grow and increase, until they should be the mightiest and the greatest among the influences and institutions of the earth; and, second, that they should be beneficent in character and result, furnishing rest, protection and nourishment, physical, intellectual and moral, for all earth's population.

I. The mustard seed growing into a great tree *represents the Christian religion and Church.* They were indeed at the beginning small and unpromising, contemptibly so, viewed according to outward appearance and with human judgment.

1. The *Founder* was an inhabitant of one of the smallest, most remote, and most despised provinces of the Roman Empire. He was of a weak, poor, proud, narrow-minded, exclusive, unsocial and hated people. And among that people, his family was poor, and low in the social and political scale. There he lies, the Babe of Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. For thirty years he lives in the bosom of his obscure family, unknown to all but a few, and working as a carpenter to support himself and his widowed mother, in a little country village, poor and of ill repute. For three years he travels, preaches a new doctrine, gathers a band of twelve apostles and a few hundred obscure followers, mostly women, as far as appears; and then rejected with indignation by his countrymen, he is crucified between two thieves, dies a felon's death, betrayed by one apostle, forsaken by all, amid almost universal execration and reproach, being publicly owned among men only by an expiring felon. Immediately eleven apostles—obscure, illiterate men, tax-gatherers and fishermen—and a few scores of others like them, reorganize, publish the new doctrine, and institute the new Church, amid the derision and execration of their neighbors, and utterly unknown to the world abroad.

2. Could anything be more insignificant in its beginning, or less auspicious of great and lasting results? Yet the text declares that the new doctrine and organization are the commencement of "the kingdom of heaven" on earth, and that it

shall overtop all kingdoms in its grandeur, extending more widely, lasting longer, and immeasurably overshadowing them all in the long and mighty sweep of its beneficent influences. Of this feeble and contemptible organization, the outward embodiment of this hated and so-called new religion, our text predicts that it shall never be overthrown or dissolved, but that it shall live, and, like the mustard plant among herbs, grow and tower above all worldly philosophies and kingdoms and organizations, and fill all the world with the might and magnificence of its healing and health-giving power.

3. Nor is the text solitary in this prediction. Many other passages of Scripture, uttered by a long line of prophets, through many hundreds of years, foretell in varied language the same thing. Genesis xxii. 18. Psalm ii. 8. Psalm lxxii. 8–11. Isaiah ii. 1–4. Isaiah lx. 1–14. Daniel ii. 44, 55. Zechariah xiv. 7–21. Such are a sample of the numerous predictions, everywhere contained in the Scriptures, concerning the future greatness and glory of the religion and Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And all this, notwithstanding the prophets foresaw and foretold the great and deadly opposition which they would have to encounter from the malice of Satan, from the hatred of a fallen world, and from the corrupt doctrines, hearts and lives of large bodies of pretended friends.

4. Now an appeal to history and to the present and prospective condition of the Christian religion and Church will sustain and demonstrate the truth of all that the prophetic Scriptures have uttered.

On the morning of Pentecost, the Spirit was shed forth, the little Church in Jerusalem, comprising one hundred and twenty persons in all, was endued with power from on high, and soon myriads of the Jews believed,* and probably a still larger number of the heathen. To say nothing of the results which crowned the labors of the eleven apostles and of the evangelists and preachers, and of their converts, whom persecution scattered all abroad, preaching and teaching the gospel of the kingdom unto all, God working in them and with them, and confirming the word with signs following; Paul alone successfully preached, and organized churches all over the Roman Empire and beyond it—from Arabia to the pillars of Hercules; so that we need only speak of what God wrought by him, in making the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, in order to obtain a large view of the early and rapid extension of the kingdom of heaven on earth. Before one generation of men had passed away, after Pentecost, the vigorous plant had spread abroad its roots and sent out its branches over the three known divisions of the world—Asia, Africa and Europe. For three hundred years, the Great Red Dragon, with the Roman Empire as his battle-ax, attempted its demolition; and ten bloody persecutions ended in its complete establishment. So the tall oak, that beetles on the mountain's brow, has oft withstood the fierce winds and storms that assailed it, and tossed abroad its

* Acts xxi. 20.

stalwart arms with a bolder and a hardier defiance than before.

All the physical and moral forces of earth and hell opposed that kingdom that cometh not with observation; but in vain. Her strange soldiery triumphed even through defeat, and even dying conquered; and until the present hour, a bush burning, but unconsumed, she lives and grows and conquers. I can not stay to detail the facts of her history through these long, weary centuries of conflict, oppression and conquest, of tears and groans, and blood and triumph, which have passed over her. I can not stay to tell how, with vital powers victorious, she lived (but not wholly unsmitten) through that moral malaria and maelstrom of vice and ungodliness, in the sirocco breath of which the ancient civilization perished. Nor have we time to tell how she remained unbroken amid the fierce and fearful convulsions which shook the old iron empire of Rome to pieces—how, stronger than Alaric and his Goths, hardier than Attila and his Huns, mightier than Genseric and his Vandals, were the meek, unhelmeted, ungreaved, ungirded soldiery of the great Captain of our salvation; and how those fierce, reckless, scornful sons of blood and darkness came to bow down in meek submission. Nor may I detain to tell of that horrible smoke of the bottomless pit (which even yet darkens the Oriental sky); nor of the Saracenic (Mohammedan) locusts which came out of it, whose king was "Destroyer," and who, for a hundred and fifty weary years of blood and fire, "had

power, as the scorpions of the earth have power;"* nor of the "loosing of the four angels, bound in the great river Euphrates" (the four Turkish sultanies), whose breastplates were of fire and jacinth and brimstone, whose horses' heads were as the heads of lions, from whose mouths there issued fire and smoke and brimstone, whose number was twice ten thousand times ten thousand, and who for an hour and a day and a month and a year (three hundred and ninty-one years) had power to torment those who dwell on the earth;† nor of the rise and reign of the great western Antichrist, the man of sin and son of perdition, the Pope of Rome, with his menial priestlings, who for well-nigh these twelve hundred and sixty years has ceased not to oppose, to persecute and to wear out the saints of the Most High, and to make himself and all about him drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.‡ Nay, I may not in this particular manner, even name the chief of the great struggles of the Church of God, in ancient, medieval and modern ages. It would take days and months to trace down the valleys of ages the footsteps of the noble army of the martyrs, who have, in every age, rallied around Christ's crown and covenant, and doing battle nobly for truth and righteousness have fallen where they fought. Earth has hardly a country and hardly a cavern which has not heard their confession and witnessed their fidel-

* Revelation ix. 3. † Revelation ix. 13–17
‡ 2 Thessalonians ii. 3. Revelation xvii. 7.

ity. There is hardly a hill or hillock which has not been red with their blood.

Often has the enemy prematurely boasted a triumph. Often, when seeming reverse and disaster came upon Zion, has he exultantly exclaimed "Aha! we would have it thus." Often have they been certain of success, as, for example the French *madmen*, but as often have their plans been thwarted and their hopes blighted. He who sits in heaven laughed. Jehovah had them in derision. He spake to them in his wrath and vexed them in his sore displeasure. Yea, even to this hour the song of Zion is, "Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth . . . The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.*"

These enemies of Zion, after all their boastful and assured anticipations of triumph, during these last eighteen centuries, have perished; but she still lives. They are dead, and she writes their epitaph. The nations, kingdoms and empires, the tongues, tribes and organizations, the philosophies, theologies and sciences (falsely so-called), that have opposed her, are extinct, but she flourishes in the bloom of immortal youth and beauty. That against which they warred—the kingdom of heaven—immutable amidst change, indestructible amid ruin, the last, living monument of departed ages, the sole subsisting link to connect us with the age before the flood, is still, with all the undiminished and fresh vigor of youth and hope, extending her bound-

* Psalm cxxiv. 6; cxlvi. 10.

aries and increasing her power. Amid all earth's institutions and activities, like the Sinapi (mustard) among plants, she is towering upward and spreading abroad her boughs to the sunshine and the breeze, overtopping and overshadowing all the kingdoms of the earth and all the powers of evil. Already, at least, a nominal Christianity (and much of it vital and real) covers the western hemisphere, from the Arctic to the Antarctic Ocean. The banner of Him, who is the only Holy One in the midst of Israel, floats over all its continents and islands, proclaiming Him to be higher than the kings of the earth. The myriad islands of the vast Pacific, everywhere through her wide waste of waters, are by ones and twos, and scores and hundreds, subscribing with the hand and calling themselves by the name of Israel. The fires of our temple-altars are rekindling on the hills of Palestine, and from the Hellespont to the Persian Gulf. India, in a transition state, is renouncing her caste, her gods and her abominations; and the tree of life promises erelong to cover, with its shadowing branches, the land of the myrtle and the vine. The Chinese Wall is falling, and "the Flowery Kingdom" is opening to receive the Bible and the missionary; and the first-fruits of the coming harvest are already gathered from among those hundreds of millions of perishing immortals. Australia is wheeling into the ranks of the ransomed. Africa is almost literally stretching out her hands to God, and ringing in our ears the Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us." The living waters of the silvery Silva are beginning to flow softly and sweetly

through her plains, and her sunburnt sons are beginning to drink and live. Erelong those rivulets shall swell into rivers of the water of life, and her Great Sahara shall be glad for them, and all her deserts shall blossom as the rose.

Thus far history has verified the prophecy of the text, and it will yet fulfill it more and more. Already the mountain of the Lord's house has been established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills; and erelong all nations shall flow unto it, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.* The ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and the kingdoms of the nations shall do homage unto him.†

II. But the text, viewed in the light of other prophecies, predicts not only the universal extension of the Christian religion and Church, it foretells also that they shall exert a *beneficent* influence. As the full-grown mustard-tree offers rest, shelter and food for all the birds of heaven, lodging in its branches, so the influence of the Church shall be to the sons of men. The same figure is used by Ezekiel in reference to the same subject: "Thus saith the Lord God; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon a high mountain and eminent: In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of

* Micah iv. 1. Habukkuk ii. 14. † Psalm xxii. 27.

every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell."*

The same figure is employed also in Ezekiel xxxi. 1–9, and in Daniel iv. 12. By comparing these passages with the text, we are taught that the salutary influence which "the kingdom of heaven" shall exert upon the affairs of men shall be very great. And facts verify this prediction. Is it not so? Do you doubt it?

Note then some of the influences for good which she exerts upon man's temporal and earthly well-being—his *earthly* well-being I say; for we speak not now of her work as it affects his state beyond the grave. We speak not of man's redemption from eternal ruin and of his restoration to the favor, the family and the fellowship of God, in a bright, eternal heaven. We refer not now to the good news of justice satisfied and the law magnified for us; nor to the works of the devil destroyed, his prisoners delivered, death abolished, and life and immortality brought to light, and enjoyed in the Elysian beyond the river; nor to the heavenly paradise with its tree of life and river of life; nor to the bride-like city, with its pearly gates and golden streets, its cloudless rosy skies, and deathless, blessed life; nor to its robes of light and crowns of gold and sounding lyres, resounding far abroad, those ceaseless symphonies of joy which roll aloft, in ever grander anthem swell, the transports of heaven's teeming and triumphing population. Let all these pass. For them we have neither time nor tongue. They

* Ezekiel xvii. 22, 23.

are themes for spirit-tongues through the eternal ages. Oh, the length and the breadth and the depth and the height of the love of Christ for the sons of men! But our theme is a humbler one. We speak only of the work of Christianity as it stands related to man's temporal and earthly welfare. And see!

1. She teaches men how to live and how to die. She is a light to his feet and a lamp to his path in his pilgrimage journey. She furnishes him with adequate motives to shun the wrong and pursue the right.

2. She has brought not only a new light into the world, but also a new life, which, as it spreads and develops among men, transforming and renewing the whole face of the world, changes man's heart and all human institutions and interests. Is it not so? Listen. Monogamy, the Christian family, civil and religious liberty, liberty of thought and action, liberty of speech and of the press, and liberty to worship God according to the dictates of a conscience enlightened from above and none to interfere; and, in one word, all that is good in modern Christian civilization are among the fruits of her hands. Opposed, hated, thwarted and impeded as she always has been by human perversity and satanic malignity, it is nevertheless not to be denied that even in the partial influence she has been permitted to exert, she has well-nigh made a heaven of purity and joy in many a human bosom, and an Eden of bloom and of bliss in many a bleak and barren land. Souls regenerated and disenthralled; victims rescued from the maelstrom of vice; unholy

appetites and passions subdued; selfishness transformed to love; every holy and excellent disposition nourished and developed—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, truth, temperance, patience, humility, fortitude, courage, purity, integrity, godliness and spirituality, in one word, all the virtues, tempers and dispositions which purify, adorn and bless the hearts and homes and lives of men, does Christianity, by her doctrines, precepts, institutions and quickening Spirit, implant, foster and develop into fullness and completion!

And, lo, what blessed results! Descended daughter of heaven, she walks abroad in the sheen of her queenly beauty, among the barbarous, wretched tribes of earth, and life and health and purity and joy attend her footsteps. She comes to the reeking abodes of squalor, ignorance and sin, and as far and as fast as the wretched inmates yield to her influence, they are transformed by her more than magical influence. The thief is taught to steal no more. The sensual become temperate, sober and pure. The fierce and cruel are tamed and softened, and become loving and kind.

She comes to the abodes—it may be—to the *splendid* abodes of disappointment and sorrow, to hearts hungry, bereaved and desolate, whose blighted loves and hopes are moss-grown and decayed, and teaches them to throb with a new hope, to leap with a new life, and to bound exultingly with a new, grand and deathless joy.

She comes to the bedside of the dying, and as

the last, leaping life-blood chills and curdles at the heart, she fills and flushes all with the warm genial currents of the life immortal. When the last flame of life flickers dimly in its oilless socket, and gleams and glimmers onward into darkness; when sunken eye-balls glaze in death, and friends and home and earth recede from view, and rayless darkness envelops all; then, oh then, she fills and floods the soul with tides of living glories, fresh from the throne of God.

Such is something, and only something, of her renewing and transforming influences upon man, individually teaching him how to live and how to die.

3. Equally benign is her influence upon *the social man.* She goes abroad among earth's peoples; and, barbarous hordes and cannibal and savage tribes are taken from the depths of an ineffable degradation and distress, and are transformed into great and flourishing states. The deep ignorance, the fierce disposition, the thriftless and filthy habits which disgrace their manhood, the gloomy and deadly superstitions which had enslaved and tortured them, benumbing the intellect and besotting the spirit, and the holocausts and hecatombs of beastly and of human victims offered in sacrifice to their dismal deities, and all the dreary orgies of their inner temples, disappear at her coming, as flits the ill-omened bird of night before the golden arrows of the morning.

Already has she divested demon war of many of its atrocities, greatly diminished the war spirit

and the lust of military conquest and glory; the rage and carnage and havoc of war extensively giving place to the milder rivalries of peaceful art and industry. And the time approaches, when, under her influence, wars shall cease to the ends of the earth; when the war-horse shall no longer paw in the valley and swallow the ground in the fierceness of his rage, as he scents the battle from afar, the thunder of the captains and the shouting; when men shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks; when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor learn war any more.

Nor are these the only witnesses to the splendid fruits of Christianity. The neglect and even the murder of the aged, the sick, the feeble, the dependent and helpless, and even of unborn babes, she has arrested or is arresting, and with Briarean arms is erecting institutions for their support and education. Hospitals, alms-houses, asylums, schools, churches and temples of justice, at the wave of her wonder-working wand, spring up far and near.

Polygamy and domestic impurity, tyranny and misery, much as they still abound in all lands, are, under her influence, widely giving place to that finest type and prophecy of heaven, the Christian home.

Chains and handcuffs are being wrenched from the limbs of the oppressed, and civil, political and religious liberty spreads and flourishes.

Woman, no longer a slave, a beast of burden, a thing, but the counterpart, complement and com-

panion of man, is more and more rising to her true and rightful position.

Man is taught his individuality and responsibility, his divine origin, immense capabilities and eternal destiny, his rights, his dignity and his duty. In schools and churches, and other institutions, provision is made for the education of head and heart, of mind and member.

As a consequence of all this, new life and virtue are being infused into the vast masses of humanity; all human thought and enterprise are replenished and refreshed in all their thousand fountains; and society is rapidly developing and efflorescing into that wonderful, complex and constantly developing thing called "modern Christian civilization"—a thing yet in its nascency, but destined to grow up into a glorious development under the fostering influence of the religion of Jesus Christ.

That all these things (and many such there be) are the legitimate and the actual fruits of Christianity is manifest, because, when taken as a whole:

(1.) She and she only fosters them by her doctrines, precepts, institutions and influence. Else why are they not fostered in countries beyond the pale of her influence?

(2.) They are found in a greater or less degree *only*, *always*, and in all places, where the religion of the Bible is found, and the degree of their development in any given case is measured by the length of time in which Christianity has had to operate, the degree of purity in which she has subsisted and put forth her energies, her freedom from the con-

taminating doctrines and commandments of men; and in proportion to the favorableness of the circumstances in which she has been placed in each case.

(3.) She alone has furnished or can furnish the truths, the precepts and the motives which are essential to these results.

(4.) Finally, through her, and her alone, Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, exerts a quickening and transforming power on the hearts and the lives of men. Regeneration and sanctification are in a certain sense her work. She is, has been, and shall be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. It is not by any inherent and self-originating power of development that the civilization of Christendom has been advanced to its present stage, but by the power of the Holy Spirit of that great and gracious God, who has given unto his Son the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost part of the earth for his possession.

## CONCLUSION.

The prophecies of Scripture, as compared with their historic fulfillment, furnish a demonstration of the inspiration of the Holy Bible. I can not pretend to handle and develop this argument in the conclusion of a sermon; but I can not close without expressing unfeigned surprise and astonishment that any intelligent and immortal soul should be content to live without investigating it. And sure I am that no man can candidly and thoroughly examine, without finding that it not only demands,

but *compels* his faith in the divine origin and authority of the book we call the Word of God.

Prophecies, such as the Scriptures contain, if verified in history, necessarily imply inspiration from God; because they demonstrate the possession of a foresight impossible not only to man, but to any creature however great or wise. No man can foretell the future with certainty. No man can infallibly declare what shall be on the morrow, or in the next hour, and say whether he shall be sick or well, living or dead. No man can tell what new invention or discoveries shall in the next thousand years revolutionize the whole force of society; nor what will be the course of trade, or where the commercial emporium of the world; nor what wars and revolutions will take place; nor what rising will be of new empires or decay of the old. To predict, in a general way, that some great discovery shall be made, some great man live, some great empire arise, some great events occur, were an easy task, and certain of success. But to utter the prediction with minute details as to time, place and other circumstances, as the Scriptures do, is a very different thing, and to do it truthfully requires inspiration of God. For example, if I and hundreds of other men, during the last four thousand years, acknowledging our ignorance, but claiming that we spake under the influence of the Holy Spirit, had uttered such predictions of some future great man, as all the prophets, for four thousand years, uttered concerning the coming, the person and the work of the Messiah; and if for thousands of years together

these predictions had been fulfilled; and if you had lived all these millenniums to hear the predictions and witness their fulfillment; then, such is the constitution of human nature, that you could not but believe that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."*

Our text is not a solitary utterance, standing alone, on the sacred page, but a masterly and inimitable summary of a thousand prophecies uttered by holy men in the preceding centuries—the substance of a vast chain and system of prophecies concerning Christ and his kingdom. And yet for these eighteen centuries and more, event after event, link after link, in that vast chain and body of prophecy, have fallen out just as they were foretold. There has been, in thrice ten thousand particulars, a fulfillment of events, just as they were predicted, and not one failure. And so it has been with many other bodies of prophecy contained in Scripture, beside those referring to Christ; for instance, those referring to the three sons of Noah, the two sons of Abraham, the two sons of Lot, the two sons of Isaac, to David, to Egypt, and each of the various countries surrounding the Holy Land, as Edom, Moab, Syria, Assyria, Nineveh, Tyre, Babylon and Rome. A compend of the history of all these countries and cities was written in the Bible hundreds or thousands of years before it was verified—verified not only in the general outlines, but in the particular and circumstantial details of time, place, cause, manner, agent, instrument, and result. Age

* 2 Peter i. 21.

after age, century after century, witness the fulfillment of whole systems of prophecy—predictions not of things likely to happen in the ordinary course; but of the most unheard of and the most unlikely things; of things not only improbable, but at the time apparently impossible; and yet all either have been fulfilled or are fulfilling. Not one jot or tittle of all that the prophets have spoken has fallen to the ground.

As an illustration, take that body of prophecies, of which our text is a summary, uttered by prophets of most diverse character, education, race, age, and condition. They all foretell a Messiah should arise; that he should be of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, of the house of David, born of a poor family, of a virgin mother, four hundred and ninety years after the decree of the Babylonish monarch to rebuild Jerusalem. They foretold the circumstances of his life and death, and of the awful retributions of Providence—lasting through many centuries—on his betrayers and murderers. They tell us that he would establish "the kingdom of heaven" in the world; that his Church and religion should be small at first, but that it should not perish, nor be subverted; that in the midst of constant opposition and strife from within and without, it should increase in extent and influence, until it should fill and subdue the world; that the constitution and polity of the Christian people, and their doctrines, precepts and manner of life, should be different from those of all other peoples and should be hated by them; that they should meet

the combined, concentrated and constant opposition of earth and hell; that those who killed them would think they did God service; and yet that constant progress and universal triumph awaited them. Remarkable prediction! Wonderful fulfillment!

Twelve poor, obscure, illiterate men, members of a hated race, set out to revolutionize the doctrines and laws, the manners and habits, the institutions and customs, of the world! From the beginning they encounter the derision and detestation and violent persecution of all. All the fanatic energy of the Jewish people, all the iron power of the Roman Empire, is against them. Friends, relations, neighbors and fellow citizens; poets and orators and philosophers; priests and people; courts, camps and armies—all are combined in an indefatigable and violent attempt to put them down. It was a contest without retreat, truce, pause or compromise. And yet these poor men were not overcome. Their little organization was not put down. They overcame by the word of their testimony and by the blood of the Lamb. The Church lived and lives; it flourished and flourishes. Strange prediction! Marvelous fulfillment! Who can look at this single section of prophecy, and not feel in his inmost soul that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy?"

## SERMON V.

# The Parable of the Leaven.

MATTHEW XIII. 33.

(*First Sermon.*)

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The parable of the mustard-seed represents the outward growth of the heavenly kingdom; the parable of the leaven represents its inward life and power. The one pictures the effect, the other the cause. The kingdom of heaven, small as a grain of mustard-seed in its beginnings, and great as the mustard-tree among herbs at last, becomes so by the indomitable principle of spiritual life—which principle of life, by a change of figure, is likened in our text to leaven. As leaven by its penetrating power permeates the meal and assimilates the whole to itself by imparting to it its own properties; so the kingdom of heaven, whether it sets up its power in the individual soul or in the world, will work and continue to work until it shall have subdued all things unto itself.

I. "Leaven," in our text, is to be understood as representing, (1st) the new divine life infused into

the soul, by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the word; (2d) the same life or vital power, infused by the same Spirit, through the same instrumentality, into the world. And the affirmation is, that wherever this new life or vital power is infused, working gradually, silently and invisibly, it will certainly, at length, permeate the whole mass and assimilate it unto itself.

II. "The three measures of meal," in which the woman hid the leaven, were probably the usual amount or about the usual amount of cereal used at one time, in preparing the family loaves, and are probably adduced merely to complete the imagery of the parable, without having any particular signification. But if a particular signification be insisted on, I know not well what can be intended unless it be the tripartite nature of man, soul, spirit and body, or the soul alone viewed as including the intellect, the emotions and the will—all of which, man in his tripartite nature, the soul in its threefold division, are assimilated by the operations of the Holy Spirit.

III. I know that leaven is often, perhaps generally in the Sacred Scriptures, used as an emblem of something corrupt and corrupting. Yet this does not prevent its being used in a good sense also. Thus our Savior and Satan are both compared to a lion, but in very different senses. And the Church, in both her *best* and her *worst* state, is compared to a woman, and this with the greatest force and fitness. For nothing on earth is more lovely than a chaste, pure, good woman, and therefore she is the

fit emblem of a pure and beneficent Church. But nothing is more unlovely and loathsome than an unchaste, abandoned woman, and hence such a one is the fit emblem of a Church that has apostatized—forsaken the guide of her youth and broken the covenant of her God. So it is here. Leaven, because of its corrupt nature and corrupting tendency, is a fit emblem of impure doctrine and unholy example.* But because of its warmth, pungency, penetrating power and capacity of assimilating to itself every thing that it permeates, it is a beautiful emblem of that new nature, that new vital power infused into the soul in regeneration. Still further is the emblem suitable, because the new life infused by the Holy Spirit into the new-born soul, like leaven, works on silently, secretly, continually and effectually until the whole man is sanctified.

We will consider the text in its application, 1st, to the individual man; and, 2d, to society—the kingdom of heaven in its influences, 1st, upon the body, soul and spirit; and, 2d, upon the family, Church and State.

I. *The text in its application to individuals, the kingdom of heaven in its influences upon the body, soul and spirit of the individual man.* And,

1. I remark that the kingdom of heaven is commenced in the soul, by the infusion into it of a new principle of heavenly life. The "new creature" in Christ Jesus is something more than a mere outward reformation; something more than the abandonment of gross sins and vices; something more

* Matthew xvi. 6, 12. 1 Corinthians v. 6-8.

than the practice of outward duties, or the cultivation of human virtues. It is also something more than the change of one's religious principles, or the observance of certain forms and ceremonies. It is the infusion of a new and divine life into the soul. This the Bible plainly teaches. It is a truth which is assumed or affirmed in a thousand places and taught in a hundred different ways.

(1.) It is implied in all those passages which speak of man's natural state as a state of death, and of his spiritual state as a state of life. Ephesians ii. 1–6.

(2.) The infusion of a principle of divine life into the soul is taught in all those passages which affirm the necessity of the renewal of the soul in order that it may serve God and bring forth the fruits of holiness. Matthew vii. 17, 18; xii. 33–35.

(3.) The same doctrine is implied in all those passages which affirm man's heart and nature to be wholly corrupt and impotent to good, and incapable of self-renovation. Genesis vi. 5. Ephesians ii. 3; iv. 17, 18. Jeremiah xiii. 23; xvii. 19. Romans i. 28–31.

(4.) The doctrine is more directly taught in all those passages which describe the work of God upon the soul. That work is described in various ways; for example, as

A quickening or as a resurrection from the dead. Ephesians ii. 5, 6.

A circumcising of the heart. Romans ii. 29. Philippians iii. 3.

A new heart. Ezekiel xxxvi. 26.

A new man. Colossians iii. 10. Ephesians iv. 24.

A new creature or new creation. 2 Corinthians v. 17.

Many other figures and representations are employed to describe God's work in the soul, all of which clearly imply the implantation of a new and spiritual principle.

2. This new principle of spiritual life is infused into the soul by the operation of the Holy Spirit. The new birth is attributed to the Holy Spirit. John iii. 5, 8. Believers are declared to live in the Spirit, to walk after the Spirit, to have the Spirit dwelling within them, to be temples of the Spirit. All gifts and graces, all good in the soul, are declared to be from the Spirit. Galatians v. 16–23. Ephesians v. 9.

Thus it is the Holy Spirit by whom the leaven of life is infused into the heart. It is he who commences, carries on and completes the work of grace in the souls of believers; who convinces of sin and misery, enlightens the mind in the knowledge of Christ, persuades and enables the soul to embrace Christ for salvation; who renovates the soul into the image of God, subdues us entirely to him, purifies the heart more and more, and prepares us for heaven. O thou holy and dove-like Spirit, descend into our souls, make them thy temple, renew them in the divine image, powerfully turn us to God, mightily build us up in holiness, and fit us for heaven. And may we all and speedily become a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Behold what strong grounds of hope and conso-

lation God gives to those who seek him. Does the guilt of numerous and aggravated transgressions arise to terrify the conscience and sink dying hope in the black gulf of despair? Jesus washes all the stains of the penitent sinner away, makes him clean and righteous, and restores him to the favor and family of God. Do corruption, wickedness, ungodliness, and all evil passions and appetites fester in his soul? The Holy Spirit, who is God Almighty, undertakes to purify that soul, and make it a fit habitation for God, and a vessel of glory. And now, O immortal hearers, are you willing to rely on this glorious Jesus and his good Spirit? Do you rely on them and choose them as your portion and your rest? Then lift up your heads. Give sorrow and fears and dark forebodings to the winds; for the day of your redemption draweth nigh. The eternal God is thy refuge. The everlasting arms are underneath you. The God of peace in his own good time and way will sanctify your whole spirit, soul and body, by his Spirit which is given unto you. And though you walk in the midst of trouble, you shall have life from him. Though you be led through fire and water, you shall be brought up to a wealthy place. Though you lie defiled among the pots, you shall yet come forth as the doves whose wings are covered with silver and their feathers tipped with yellow gold. Yea, nothing is too hard for God. He is able by his mighty power to subdue even all things unto himself. When Jesus takes it upon him to say: "I will; be thou clean," you may be certain that your leprosy shall be

cleansed. Well might Paul say: "If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

3. I remark, once more, that the Holy Spirit infuses this divine and all-conquering principle of life into the soul through the instrumentality of the inspired word. He uses the truth of the Bible as the instrument of the conversion of souls to God, and of their sanctification. If he convinces the soul of sin and misery, he does it by applying truth to the conscience. If he leads a soul to Christ for salvation, he does it by the teachings and encouragements of the word. If he conveys strength in the hour of weakness, comfort in the time of sorrow, or assistance in the hour of battle and danger, this also he does by the instrumentality of the word. The Savior prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."† He said, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I spake unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."‡

* Romans viii. 31, 35, 38, 39. † John xvii. 17.
‡ John vi. 63.

Truth, inspired truth, known, believed, remembered, and appropriated to our souls, is the sword in the hand of the Spirit, with which he slays our enemies;* is the bread on which he nourishes and strengthens our souls; is the sun, with which he irradiates our pathway; the dew, with which he refreshes our spirits; the rain which he distills upon his garden; and the medicine, with which he heals the soul. He who is weak in the Scriptures, or who knowing them does not make them his daily meditation, is a weak Christian—is liable to err in a thousand ways, to be pierced with a thousand wounds, and to suffer a thousand sorrows. Nor does he suffer his people to neglect his word. By a thousand voices does he make them hear and heed it—by the voice that goes forth from the sacred desk from Sabbath to Sabbath; by the voice of Christian friends surrounding us; by the voice of the daily examples, both good and bad, by which we are surrounded; by the great arm of his providence upon us and around us, leading us whither he will; by the rod of his chastisements and the yoke of his displeasure heavy upon our souls; by the voice of conscience within us—by all these does he lead us to his word, and through that word understood, believed, appropriated, rested in and obeyed, does he quicken the spiritual life within us, mortifying our corrupt members, leading us closer to God, conforming us more and more unto his image, and making us exceedingly glad with his countenance.

* Ephesians vi. 17.

4. Let it be carefully noted that this kingdom, this life of God infused by the Holy Spirit into the soul, is compared to leaven, because *it is only gradually, and often by slow degrees, that it diffuses itself through the soul, and assimilates it to God.* We are not to think that the new convert is all at once a perfect saint—entirely freed from sin, completed in holiness and ripened for heaven. Far from it. In the kingdom of grace, as in the kingdom of nature, God moves on in his great work step by step. When the precious leaven of grace is infused into the soul, from that moment the great change is begun; but it is only begun, and much remains to be accomplished. From the moment the leaven is hid in the meal, it begins to work, but it only begins. It is only a little lump compared with the mass to be leavened, and perhaps it will be hours before the process shall have been completed. When the soul is regenerated, it is born again. But in the spiritual, as in the natural world, that which is born is but an infant at first. This new-born infant is perfect in its kind. It has all the organs and faculties of the full-grown man, but they are immature. It has repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. It has love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and all other Christian graces. It has those principles and instincts which impel it to follow after whatsoever things are just, true, pure, lovely, honest, and of good report. But all these graces and affections are yet in their infant, budding state. As the new-born babe has the faculties of reason and judgment, but yet can

hardly use them at all until they grow and mature, and in the mean time makes many a hurtful and irrational blunder; so it is with the graces of him who is born into the kingdom of heaven. As the little babe has feet, but can hardly use them at all, and at first walks with weak and tottering steps and at the risk of many a fall and many a wound; so it is with him who is "born again" in his assays to walk in the ways of holiness. The infant must be nourished, clothed and taught, and by slow degrees, through many dangers, mistakes and injuries, it comes at last to full and perfect manhood. So it is with the new convert. He needs to be nourished on the sincere milk of the word; afterward to be fed on the strong meat of divine truth; to be taught by precept and example; to be exercised in the life and duties of holiness. Thus the leaven penetrates and spreads, until the whole is leavened. This gradual growth of the spiritual principle and power in the soul our Savior elsewhere illustrates, by comparing it to the growth of corn from the seed—"first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

Observation 1. This point, the gradual growth of religion in the soul, is one to which we all need to give earnest attention. Many seem to think that having obtained conversion, acceptance with God, and a place in the visible Church, there is but little more to do. They think all is well, if they shall but hold on to the religion they have and not lose it. Hence many, instead of growing in grace, do little more than stand still and hold their own. They pass

through life with a low standard of piety. Often you can hardly distinguish them from the world. They are not increasing, or are increasing but slowly, in knowledge and holiness. But the Christian should cast his eyes inward, and in the light of God's word learn how much is yet to be done in his own soul, before he is perfect. He should set his mark high. He should aim at perfection—at absolute perfection—perfection in knowledge, love and holiness. Nor should he be content with anything short of this. Paul's resolution should be his: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* Such should be the spirit and resolution of every Christian, and such they will be according to the measure of the grace given him. He who is content with his present attainments in grace has never attained any grace at all, but is deceiving himself.

OBSERVATION 2. *The divine life in its growth and progress in the soul meets continued opposition and obstruction.* It is opposed by the malice and arts of Satan, by the evil example and influence of a wicked world, and, above all, by the remaining powers and principles of indwelling sin. Much sin

* Philippians iii. 12–14.

remains in the new convert. It is called in the Bible by such terms as "the law in the members," "the flesh," "the old man," "the body of sin," "the body of death," "the lusts of the flesh." These make vigorous and often fearful opposition to the spread and power of the heavenly leaven, so that oftentimes when the believer would do good evil is present with him. The law in his members wars against the law in his mind, and sometimes, for a season, brings him into captivity to the law of sin that is in his members.* Sometimes his steps have well-nigh slipped in the path of duty, and his feet have been almost gone.† Sometimes through a want of circumspection, he is brought into the net and the bands lie upon his loins. He dwells in darkness, like one dead of old. Waters almost cover him, his soul well-nigh sinks beneath the stream. Sometimes he is made to feel as if his power were gone and God had forsaken him. For many a weary hour he is left to struggle and strangle as he prays, "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire" (of my sins), "where there is no standing. O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee. Draw nigh to my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of my enemies."‡

Observation 3. Although the leaven of life meets with opposition and obstruction in the soul, *still it is in the long run victorious and spreads farther and farther.* Though the good man fall, he shall not be

* Romans vii. 14–24. † Psalm lxxiii. 2.
‡ Psalm lxix. 1, 2, 5, 18.

utterly cast down, because the Lord with his strong hand upholds him.* Gathering wisdom and strength from his hurt, he rises from his fall, and the language of his faith and hope is: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy." Thus gathering experience, wisdom and strength from his very falls, and heart and hope from his mishaps and sorrows, the Christian goes on increasing toward the measure of the stature of the full-grown man in Christ. The leaven spreads in his heart and soul. He is weaned more and more from his idolatries and his sins; and leans more and more on God. He finds an increasing delight in religious exercises and duties. He comes more and more to set his trust and hope in God. More and more the immoralities and impurities of his heart are rooted out, and more and more does he gather of the purities and joys of heaven into his bosom. He goes on from strength to strength; his path becomes brighter and brighter; his step becomes steadier, his hand more skillful, and his heart more cheerful. He becomes more and more resigned to the will of God, and confides in his name more and more. His understanding is enlightened more and more, and he gets a clearer and still clearer insight into the glories of redemption by Jesus Christ. His affections are more and more purified, and become more and more like those of the redeemed in heaven. His conscience is continually a more faithful monitor. More and more does he find that his heart and hope and home are in heaven. And amid

* Psalm xxxvii. 24.

storm and amid sunshine this work of God in his soul goes steadily on to its final consummation.

Observation 4. *This growth is not always a sensible and perceptible growth.* The saint is not at all times conscious of a present advancement. The young oak, that has sprung from the acorn, has both its winter and summer seasons. There are times when, by the frost, it is stripped of all its green and goodly foliage, and all its vital juices are turned to ice in their frozen cells; when its youthful stem and leafless branches strain for life in winter's fierce and howling tempests. And he, who looks with untaught eye upon the blasted and straining tree, declares its glory gone, and its hope lost. But it is not so. Even this death-like winter inures to its advantage. The hoar frost hardens its fibers, and the fierce winds train its roots faster and firmer round the rocks beneath the soil. When a hundred winters shall have come and gone, lifting itself up, the monarch of the forest, with a deeper root and a tougher trunk, it will fling abroad its stalwart arms with a bolder and hardier defiance than ever before to the dark tempests that thunder around them. So it is with those who are planted by the grace of God in the hill of Zion. The regenerated soul has its seasons when no *visible* progress, though *real* progress is made. Has it turned aside from God? Has it looked to wealth, power, honor, pleasure, or any other earthly thing, as its staff of strength and its fountain of joy? The very suddenness and bitterness of the disappointment drives it in distress and tears back to God, from whom it

had wandered, and fixes it there more firmly than before. Do Satan, the world and the flesh war against it, seemingly vanquish it, lead it to the very verge of the precipice, and almost ruin it? In its very extremity, and misery, and despair, it learns, as it never learned before, that the Lord is its tower of strength, and it comes to hide under his wing and lean on his arm and to trust to his protection, as it never would have learned to do, without just such a trial as this.

We might, at great length and by many instances, show that this growth, though continual, is not always perceptible, either to the believer himself or to others. Like the leaven in meal, grace works silently, secretly, continually and effectually, and though its progress be not at every instant visible, still it works surely on to an accomplishment of the intended result.

Observation 5. *We should mollify the harshness of our judgments upon weak and erring brethren.* We are not to expect perfection on earth. The leaven of the divine life will not have fully done its work this side of the grave. In the case of all real Christians, their falls and seeming retrogressions shall, in the end, work to their spiritual advantage. Now that the inherent and innate poison that taints the soul has broken out into active and malignant disease; now that the inward leprosy has broken out into loathsome and deadly distemper; be assured that the unhappy sufferer is learning to look to the Great Physician, and to prize him and love him as he never did before. Now that the poor pilgrim in

this weary wilderness has been assaulted by enemies; now that he is foiled and baffled, vanquished and driven back; now that he is down and helpless and bleeding and almost destroyed; be assured he is lifting his eyes to the hills of his help, and calling upon his Captain, Jehovah Sabaoth, as he never called before. Be assured he is learning new lessons of the preciousness of Christ, and of the evils of a proud and a careless walk, which will profit him all his days. Although he shall carry the scars of this contest to the grave, yet assuredly he will henceforth keep close to Jesus, and go up through this great wilderness "leaning upon the arm of his Beloved."

Observation 6. The text suggests *the reason for most of the duties which the New Testament enjoins upon Christians with respect to one another.* Is the work of divine grace a gradual work, like leaven spreading through the meal? Then during its progress, Christians are imperfect, and hence the reason why you should bear and forbear with one another. Hence also the reason why you should sympathize with each other in your sorrows, and pray for each other, edify one another, and provoke to love and good works; why when one is overtaken in a fault, others who are spiritual should restore him in the spirit of meekness, considering themselves lest they also be tempted.

Observation 7. But let me not be understood, *as lowering the standard of Christian morality or piety.* Nor let me be understood as admitting that Christians have not a *higher*—taken as a class, a *much*

higher—standard of morality and piety than others. Christians are imperfect; and scornful opposers, as keen to descry their faults as the vulture to scent the carcass, often pounce upon them, ridicule Christianity, blaspheme Christians, and say, "There is no reality in their religion—they are no better than other men." This is an old objection, and has been often and variously answered. One sufficient answer is this: "The charge is not true, and those who make it know it is not true." Empty your jails of all except true Christians, and your sheriffs will be idle. Reprieve from the gallows all except true Christians, and you will abolish capital punishment. Empty the land of all except them, and you will not leave a thief, a gambler, a drunkard, a robber, or a cut-throat in it. Banish all but them, and grog-shops will go down, and schools, churches and alms-houses will go up (if, indeed, alms-houses should then be needed), ignorance will disappear, and the sun of science will shine from hill to valley. Empty the world of all but them, and you will turn the world into a Paradise again. Men will then take off locks and bolts from the doors of their dwellings and sleep securely. Empty the world of all except them, and all the nations will become one great confederated republic. Before five years shall have elapsed armies will be disbanded and navies left to rot in the harbor, weapons of war will be changed into instruments of peaceful industry, and a universal shout will ring from mountain and plain, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

On the contrary, take all true, earnest, warm-hearted Christians from the land, and you have not rescued one prisoner from jail, nor delivered one victim from the gallows, nor diminished the crowd of criminals that swarm in our streets by a single man, nor abated the ignorance, vice and filthy squalor of community by a single jot. You have taken, however, from society all the leaven of virtue it had, and all the salt which kept it from rotting, and in one generation, or at most two, your entire population will be as destitute of moral worth and as besotted in coarse and damning vice, as are those veriest devils that have just astounded and terrified the world by enacting their infernal atrocities in India.* Yet these incarnate fiends are human beings. They have that fallen, depraved human nature which is common to all, and, as all history shows, are but fair specimens of what men always have been and always will be without the religion of the Bible.

* The Sepoy Rebellion.—ED.

## SERMON VI.

# The Parable of the Leaven.

MATTHEW XIII. 33.

(*Second Sermon.*)

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Having considered, in the preceding discourse, the work of divine grace in the individual soul, we come now to consider the influence of Christianity upon the world. As this new and divine life, when infused into a soul, spreads more and more, until it gains the mastery and assimilates the whole soul to God, so Christianity infused into the world is destined to spread until all the societies, laws, customs and institutions of men shall be imbued with it, and the whole world be filled with the life and love of God.

God, the great Author of all, made our world very good. He made man in his own image—his body beautiful, perfect and immortal, his mind and heart perfectly pure and good. His "understanding was light in the Lord." His heart was a spiritual altar on which burned, day and night, the living flame of pure and holy affections. The frames and

tempers of mind and heart, which give to heaven all its sweetness, were his. He was placed in a home meet for such a resident. Paradise, a garden planned by the mind, and finished by the finger, of God, was his home. And there, in rosy bowers, fanned by gentle and balmy winds; the birds and brooks and breeze his music; the tree of life his food; the angels his guards and companions; God, the great and glorious I AM, his friend and daily visitor; the sweet and lovely Eve his helpmeet; happiness throbbing in every pulse, hope blooming in every blossom, music softly swelling in every sound, beauty beaming in every ray, glory glowing in every star, rapture dwelling in every touch, deliciousness gushing in every fruit, immortality flowing in purple tides in every limb, he dwelt embowered in bliss. But in an evil hour Satan came, and man fell—man yielded, and was lost. Sin was introduced upon our earth—the glory of our world was marred—God's image was defaced in all human bosoms—moral anarchy and disorder became universal—the world became a wandering star, reeling into the blackness of darkness—Satan became the god of this world—immortality perished—joy vanished—piety died—virtue faded—peace expired—hope fled—darkness entered—death reigned, and a flood of sin, selfishness, sorrow and despair engulfed all. But God is good, merciful, long-suffering and gracious. He remembered our world in its low and lost condition. He laid help upon One that is mighty, and sent him hither to destroy the works of the devil,

to redeem man, to reclaim our lost world, and restore it to its allegiance to God. When the divine Deliverer came, day dawned, and the daystar arose upon our earth. The Son of God became incarnate, and wrought out salvation for sinners. He obeyed, suffered, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven, as our covenant head, surety and substitute. After his ascension, all power in heaven and earth being put into his hands for the accomplishment of his high undertaking, he shed forth the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of resurrection and life in our world. He converted men, established the Church, and gave to it ordinances and officers. He has made the Church the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Thus a new era dawned upon our world. A new life, and, with it, a new hope, was given to our race. And the prophecy of our parable is, that this new light and life shall spread, like leaven, through all the world and fill it with holiness and virtue.

When expounding the parable of the mustard-tree, we showed that it prophesied abundantly that the Christian Church shall never be destroyed, but that it shall become universal, and last forever. We also showed that this universal dominion is to be beneficent in its character and results—that it is to be a dominion of righteousness and peace, of justice and love, of light and purity and prosperity. This same class of truths is suggested in the parable of the leaven. As the whole quantity of meal was leavened, so the whole world is to be pervaded and influenced by Christianity. The nations that sit in

darkness and in the shadow of death are yet to be enlightened. Intellectual and moral night is yet to be chased from all the earth by the Sun of righteousness. War, despotism and slavery, ignorance, vice and immorality, with the sorrows they produce, are to be abolished. Intelligence, piety, morality, benevolence and beneficence will become universal, and earth keep jubilee a thousand years. All families shall be nurseries for heaven; all institutions shall be based upon the laws of the Bible; all civil governments shall be so many shields to defend the earth; all civil rulers so many ministers of God to men for good; all social circles so many centers of intellectual and moral life and purity and joy; and all public enterprises so many schemes originated in wisdom and love, executed with power and skill, and conducted to a benevolent issue. As the leaven hid in three measures of meal spread and spread, until the whole was leavened, so the kingdom of heaven, the life and power of God, penetrating the family, the Church and the State, operates in them silently, secretly, mightily and continually, and shall continue thus to operate, from generation to generation, and from century to century, until the whole earth is converted and Christianized. And then shall be heard a voice, like the sound of many waters, like the sound of mighty thunderings, going up round about the thone, from the face of the whole earth and from under the whole heavens, saying: "Amen, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Viewing the text, in this light, we remark as follows:

1. Divine grace, in operating on the world, *uses the means best suited to its purpose.*

(1.) *It enlightens men as to truth and duty.* By the word, read and preached, it appeals to them as reasonable beings. It makes them acquainted with God in his being, perfections, works and purposes, and with his just and reasonable claims upon their love, worship and service. It makes them acquainted with their own origin, condition and destiny. It informs them as to their present, fallen and miserable condition, and of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. It tells them what they are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man. The Bible is a lamp from heaven to guide us to heaven. It is a light to our feet and a lamp to our path. He who devoutly and reverently studies it will be made wise unto salvation. It is a perfect standard of moral truth and duty. Its precepts conduct infallibly to wisdom, purity, peace, and to heaven.

> "Within this awful volume lies
> The mystery of mysteries.
> Oh, happiest they of human race,
> To whom our God has given grace
> To read, to hear, to fear, to pray,
> To lift the latch and force the way;
> But better had they ne'er been born
> Who read to doubt, or read to scorn."

(2.) *It presents the most suitable and powerful motives to influence men to a life of holiness and virtue.* It tells men of an Omniscient God, from whom they can conceal nothing. It tells them of an Omnipres-

ent God, from whom they can not escape, though they should climb into heaven, or dig into hell, or flee on the wings of light to the ends of the sea. It tells them of a pure and holy God, in whose presence evil can not dwell, and who is angry with wicked men every day. It tells them of the rewards of virtue and vice, both in this world and in the world to come. In short, the motives, with which it influences men, are high as heaven, deep as hell, sweet as life, terrible as death, lasting as eternity, and weighty as the infinite favor or the infinite wrath of God, resting upon soul or body forever and ever. With such motives as these, it arrests the hands of violence, seals the eyes of concupiscence, and closes the lips of all iniquity. With such motives as these, it fans the kindling flame of charity, nerves the toiling hand of virtue, sustains the weary heart of philanthropy, and strews with flowers the path of piety and virtue. "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me."*

(3.) *It affords the world the most worthy patterns of holiness and virtue.* Active and heavenly-minded Christians are the light and salt of the world. They are the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of God, not on tables of stone, but on the fleshly tables of the heart. And their example and influence are made to tell with effect upon all the laws, customs, institutions, sentiments, and manners of the world. In proportion as Christians are led by the Spirit of Christ, in that proportion (though

* Psalm cxix. 50.

they be a little company) will the influence of their example be wide-reaching and salutary. In our preceding discourse we adverted to some of the blessed and glorious achievements of Christianity in the promotion of worth and excellence of individual character. In this way Christianity exerts a powerful influence upon the world. It has thus very largely mitigated the cruelties of war and the penal severities of criminal laws. It has covered all Christendom with benevolent institutions for the relief of the indigent, the unfortunate, and infirm. Under its benign influence, the cruel and corrupting fashions and amusements of other times and of unchristian countries have been banished. Gladiatorial games are unknown in Christian lands. Aliens and strangers are no longer treated as enemies. The domestic and social position of woman is recognized. She is no longer regarded as a slave or a chattel, but is treated as man's companion and his other self. That all this, and much else that time would fail to tell, have been accomplished by Christianity is susceptible of the most overwhelming demonstration. I know of no great historian or philosopher who doubts it, and even some infidel authors admit it.

2. The second general remark we make is that the leaven of life which Christ brought down from heaven and infused into humanity *will finally assimilate the whole world to God.*

Already has its reformatory influence been immense and incalculable on all the nations among whom it has spread. In order to estimate this aright, I would have to give you a picture of what

the world has been and is where the Bible and its influence are unknown; and then another of what it is and is becoming, where the influence of the Bible prevails. Take any country, in which the life and power of Christianity are unknown, and you will find such things as we now proceed to mention.

(1.) In such a country *war* has ferocities which make a Christian's ears tingle at the hearing of them. Who has not heard of the almost satanic, hellish cruelties which the Indians of this country inflict upon their enemies. You all know that no age, no sex, no rank, no property, no rights, are sacred with them. You have all been told how they maim, torture and butcher in the most cruel manner. The bare recital of their atrocious barbarities makes the blood run cold, and keeps the eyes unclosed at night on the sleepless pillow. And now remember that what war is among them, it is and always has been among nations that have not been leavened with the religion of Jesus. All profane history is but one immense and overwhelming proof of what I say. Were I to commence giving instances, I could not tell where to begin or where to end. Whose ears have not tingled, and whose blood has not curdled in his veins, as for the last few months he read the news from India? Or who is ignorant of the atrocities which the contending factions in China, in the civil war which has been waging for years, perpetrate upon each other? And who is so ignorant as not to know that what war is among North American Indians, what war is in India, and what war is in China, war is and always

has been in countries into which Christ has not infused the leaven of the kingdom of heaven? When or where was war less hellish in its character, among nations that knew not God? Was it among the ancient Carthagenians? Let a single instance stand for all. Asdrubal, their general, to avenge a defeat, collected all the prisoners he had taken in two whole years, and subjected them to the most exquisite tortures, putting out their eyes, cutting off their ears, fingers, legs and arms, tearing their skin with iron rakes and harrows, and then throwing them headlong from the city wall. Was it among the brave and polite Greeks? Let one instance instead of a hundred thousand answer. I refer to the treatment of the Brachidæ by Alexander. These people submitted without opposition and opened their gates with demonstrations of joy. But he plundered their city and burnt it, and murdered the inhabitants, not leaving a single living soul—and all this because their ancestors, one hundred and fifty years before, had done something inimical to the interests of Greece. Was it among the Goths and Vandals? Genghis Khan pursued the plan of utter extermination in his wars and hesitated not to butcher a hundred thousand persons at once. Tamerlane is said to have been more humane; and the historians inform us that "he seldom carried his sportive cruelty further than pounding three or four thousand people in mortars or building them among bricks in a wall." If such be the tender mercies of the wicked, how dreadful beyond description must their cruelties be? I could

spend the whole of every day for a week in giving similar instances of cruelty in war—instances taken from every unchristianized country, whose history has been written—to show that war has been everywhere and always the same among men, who were not leavened with the life from heaven.

And cruel as war is in Christian lands, it is evident that the spirit of Him, who said "Love your enemies," is gradually prevailing more and more in Christendom. It will continue to prevail until all those selfish and malevolent passions which lead to war shall be banished or repressed. The time is coming when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb—the time of universal love and peace.

Now I could easily show that the progress toward sentiments of humanity and justice in war, that has been made in Christian lands, has been equaled in every other department of human rights, interests and feelings. Did we look into the domestic and household interests of men who live without the Bible, and then look into the home and the family as they are in Christian lands; did we examine the civil and political institutions of lands without Christ and contrast them with those of lands where Christianity has begun to exert a controlling influence; did we look into the systems of moral philosophy or of jurisprudence, that have prevailed among men; or look where we will, we will find that Christian life and principle, in Christian lands, are gradually diffusing a new life and power and goodness and glory into all human institutions. In several countries men are already so far reformed

as to be capable of free institutions. Truth and honesty are so advanced in Christian and especially in Protestant countries, where the Bible is free, as to furnish a stable foundation for a commerce which reaches around the world. Truth and justice so far prevail as to make our civil tribunals something more than a mockery. The rights of person and property and conscience are every century coming to be more and more understood and respected. The rights of international hospitality are almost entirely established thoughout Christendom.

Doubtless much remains to be done. Christian life has only comparatively begun to manifest its power and glory in Christian lands. Its triumphs, great as they have been, are to be eclipsed by greater triumphs yet to come. Christendom, glory of the earth as it is, shall yet become far more glorious. Reformation shall go on in every department of society, until righteousness shall flow down our streets like a mighty current. The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as waters cover the sea. Knowledge, virtue and holiness shall increase and spread abroad until the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun seven fold, as the light of seven days, and all injustice, impurity and iniquity shall, as ashamed, hide their faces from the indignant gaze of redeemed and purified society. Sabbath-breaking, and its chain of kindred crimes and sorrows, and the voice of blasphemy, shall cease out of the land. Drunkenness, idleness, ignorance, and vice of every kind, shall be abolished or hedged in on every side. Intelli-

gence, virtue, piety and industry shall be encouraged and rewarded. Yea, the leaven of the life from heaven shall work among mankind until the whole race is leavened, and earth reflects the image of God. And then when the vast resources of money and human lives, which have been lavished in war, and engulfed in a Red Sea of blood, and the vast resources of money and time and talent and life, which are now engulfed in the Dead Sea of appetite and passion and sin, are all saved and turned, as rivers of life, upon earth's great moral Saharas; then shall the wilderness and the solitary place be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Then shall men, more and still more indued with the divine leaven, which is a leaven of glory to God and love to men, have both the times and the means to undertake and accomplish every good work. The arts and sciences shall be cultivated assiduously, and with the most astonishing and beneficent results. Civil society shall be constructed anew, and every heavy abuse and wrong swept away. Earth and sea will be reduced again to human subjection. Everything will become a willing servant to man and minister to his welfare. Schools and churches will cover and crown the land. Medical science will protect from disease, or triumph over it in a manner and to an extent of which we can as yet form but an imperfect conception; and, in conjunction with temperance in all things and a more complete knowledge of physical laws, it will so prolong human life that the age of a man shall be as the age of a tree,

and a child shall die a hundred years old.* God, even our God, shall bless us. Men shall be blessed in him. He will breathe down upon us blessings as thick and bright as sunbeams.

Nor shall the leaven of the kingdom of God be confined to countries presently Christian. It shall spread farther and farther until it leavens all the countries and families of earth. Not a roving band of Tartars, not a plundering horde of Arabians, not a cannibal tribe of Africans, not a roving sailor on the rolling deep, not a lonely dweller in a sea-girt isle, but the leaven of heavenly life shall reach and leaven them all. Light shall shine over all earth's darkness. Life shall enter into all the dry bones in this valley of vision, and they shall live and arise and stand upon their feet, an exceeding great army. The sure word of promise has pledged it. The great arm of Jesus has undertaken it, and it shall be done. Even now it is in the way of being accomplished. Silently, secretly, noiselessly, the leaven spreads, and you might as soon attempt to stop the sunlight, or the winds of heaven, as to stay its progress. Further, we near the times fixed by prophecy for the speedy and wonderful completion of this work. All the signs of the times confirm this view.

If we look back at the progress made during the last half century, who can help exclaiming: "What hath God wrought?" Fifty years ago,† no country

* Isaiah lxv. 20.

† About seventy years from the present time (A. D. 1876), this sermon being prepared about twenty years ago.—ED.

seemed open to missionary effort—*now* every country is open and invites the Church to enter. *Then* no people seemed willing to receive instruction in Christianity—*now* tens of thousands and tens of millions are literally importuning us to preach among them Jesus Christ and him crucified. *Then* the entire Protestant world gave for missionary work only about twenty thousand dollars—*now* it gives almost as many millions. *Then* we had hardly mastered the language of *one* pagan nation, so that we could preach Christ to them—*now* there is hardly a language which we have not mastered. *Then* we could hardly be said to have established missions anywhere—*now* we have established them almost everywhere. *Then* we had hardly six missionaries —*now* we have ten thousand. *Then* we had hardly one convert—*now* we have two hundred and fifty thousand converts. *Then* hardly a Christian anywhere felt the obligation to live and labor for the world's conversion—*now* there is hardly a Christian anywhere who is not beginning to buckle on the harness. You will hardly find a church, or a prayer-meeting, or a family altar, or a closet, where prayer is not offered to the Lord of the harvest. You will hardly find a congregation, anywhere, in which there is not some one or perhaps several members, who are devoting sons and daughters to this work, while their brethren are devoting their gains to sustain them. All this and much more has been accomplished. But I forbear. Time would fail to tell of Bibles translated in the languages of more than six hundred millions of the

race; of tracts and books prepared and published; of presses in operation; of the journeys and sermons and labors of ten thousand laborers in Christ's vineyard; of the silent and unseen power exerted by Bibles and books and tracts, and by two hundred and fifty thousand converts scattered among the nations, and every one of them a center of influence, a focus of light, a fountain of life, and a lever of power in the place and among the people where he dwells. And now again I ask, How can we look back upon the achievements of the last fifty years and not see that this leaven spreads faster and further than ever before; and that it is destined, and that right speedily, to leaven the whole mass of humanity?

3. I ask, in conclusion, who regrets the prospect? Who regrets to see this leaven of Christian life and power spreading as it does, and extending its influence as it does? Surely no good man does, no lover of human rights and weal, no man who loves virtue and fears God, no man who desires to see the race happy here and saved hereafter. Destroy Christianity, and you destroy the last hope of the philanthropist and the patriot. Destroy Christianity, and you destroy the last hope of the sinner, and that to all eternity. Destroy it, and you destroy the only perfect standard of truth and duty the world has ever seen or will ever see; you destroy the most high and weighty motives to a life of purity and justice and benevolence the world has ever had; you destroy the only living moral power now in the world, the last remaining barrier

against the gloomy and obscene horrors of superstition and the frantic atrocities of atheism. Destroy it, and you at once sap the foundations of every institution now existing on earth, and cut the nerves of every benevolent enterprise which has been undertaken, and is now progressing in the world. Destroy it, and you unseal the kindling volcano of human passions, you unchain the tiger in the human breast, you let loose the whirlwinds and the waterspout on life's tempestuous ocean. Destroy it, and —but enough. Thank God, you can not destroy it. This leaven from on high, this life of God, breathed by God himself into a dead world, you can not destroy. Bad men and devils have tried it long enough to be convinced, at last, that they have undertaken an enterprise as impossible and hopeless, as it is purely and simply devilish and infernal. Try it, if you choose, and you may succeed in plucking red damnation down upon yourself. Go, gather round you all the sons of Belial you can find; go, and make a covenant with death and a compact with hell; go, and fortify yourself on every side; and then go out to resist Jehovah in his great purpose; yet He that sits in heaven shall laugh. Jehovah shall have you in derision. He will brush aside the efforts of you and your allies with ten thousand times the ease with which you sweep away a cobweb. He will crush you all with ten thousand times the ease, aye, with ten thousand times the good-will with which you would crush a spider. This leaven of life divine shall spread and spread in the world until the whole is leavened.

And every good man on earth shall join every glorified being in heaven, in a shout like the sound of many waters, like the sound of mighty thunderings, saying: "Amen, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnip otent reigneth."

CONCLUSION.

1. The fulfillment of the prophecies, as to the universal spread and power of Christianity, shows that the Bible is of God.

2. The indomitable and inextinguishable life and power of Christianity and its beneficent and holy influences show it is from heaven and sustained by heaven.

3. Therefore the infidel and he who neglects this great salvation are in an awful condition, and an awful doom awaits them, except they repent.

Let Christians thank God and take courage, and double and treble their efforts for the conversion of the world.

## SERMON VII.

# The Parables of the Hid Treasure and the Pearl.

MATTHEW XIII. 44–46.

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Syria, owing to its central situation, was in ancient times the gateway between Europe, Asia and Africa, and consequently was a meeting-place and battle-ground for three continents. It was also in immediate propinquity to nomadic and warlike tribes. Hence wars there were frequent and their ravages frightful. Nor were non-combatants allowed to escape. Everything was made a prey. Consequently the inhabitants often turned their property into coin and secreted it—"buried" it—in a field for sake-keeping. Not unfrequently the owner of the hidden treasure would perish in war or otherwise, and the treasure be lost; and so it came about, that, more frequently than with us, treasures were unexpectedly found hid in a field or elsewhere.

Having in the preceding parables illustrated the growth of the kingdom of heaven in the soul and in the world, the Savior here teaches the necessity of

a personal interest therein. He teaches that religion must be a personal thing—that men must make it the business of their lives to gain an interest in Jesus Christ and the blessings of salvation. This is taught in the parables of the treasure and of the pearl. The great lessons taught in both these parables are as follows:

1. *Salvation is a great and priceless treasure.* It is worth more than all else that a man can possibly possess; for what is a man profited though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

2. *A man must make the treasure his own.* Great and valuable as it is, it can not profit us unless it is ours. What will treasure profit a man who does not possess it, or medicine a man who does not receive it, or food a man who does not eat it, or salvation a man who never embraces it, or Christ a man who has no part nor lot in Him?

3. *A man must be willing to part with everything else for Christ and salvation.* When he finds the treasure of eternal life hid in the gospel field, he must go and sell all he has and buy that field: when he finds the pearl of great price he must part with all he has and buy that pearl, or they can never be his. He that would be Christ's must be ready for Christ's sake to part with everything else. He must love him more than father and mother, brother and sister, wife and children, houses and lands, and more than his own life, or he can not be Christ's disciple.

4. The two parables teach these lessons, but with a difference. One class of men find the treas-

ures of everlasting life without seeking for them. Men digging in a field come, as it were, by accident, on a hid treasure for which they were not looking and not expecting. So with some men in obtaining salvation. It comes unexpectedly and at once. But another class find salvation only after long and patient searching, as the merchantman seeking goodly pearls. Of this class the parable of the pearl treats, but the text to-day treats of the former —the men who at once come to a knowledge of salvation without a long and tedious and painful search after it. The treasure, buried in the field, whose owner died long ago, would, of course, sometimes be found by those digging therein; and generally the finding would be unlooked for and accidental. This emblemizes the case of many, to whom salvation comes in its fullness and power and efficacy at a time when it is unlooked for, unsought and neglected. This parable beautifully presents the facts in the personal redemption of those who find salvation, without seeking after it carefully and painfully, like the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, but to whom it comes unexpectedly, and takes possession of them at once and fully.

1. As an illustration, we may refer to those who, like Jeremiah and John the Baptist,* were regenerated in infancy, together with many, very many, who being dedicated in infancy to God, in the sacrament of baptism, by pious parents, in the exercise of a living faith in God's covenant promise, did, with the water of baptism, receive the washing of regen-

* Jeremiah i. 5. Luke i. 15.

eration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. But beside this conversion of infants and children, many adults are brought into possession of the great salvation in a very similar way. Careless and thoughtless persons, ignorant and wicked persons, are sometimes by God's providence and grace met and arrested and awakened and turned to God and saved, as the Philippian jailer and Saul the persecutor. Such were Abraham and his family under the Old Testament dispensation;* and under the New, there were such cases as those of Matthew, Levi, Nathanael, the woman of Samaria, and the multitudes who were converted at Pentecost. The Savior's miracles of healing were wrought not only on those who, like blind Bartimeus, cried out after him, but also on those who were not seeking him, as at Bethesda, and at Cana, and upon the man with a withered hand.

Similar instances are occurring constantly in our own times. To many who are neither seeking nor desiring salvation, but who are living wholly under the power of a carnal, worldly and selfish mind; and, ever and anon, to those who are, like Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus, bitter opponents and persecutors, the Savior, by his providence and grace, comes in his power and love, and alarms, enlightens, allures, renews, and saves them. By one mighty wonder-stroke of providence and grace, after another, in rapid succession, they are made willing in the day of his power, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus.

* Joshua xxiv. 2, 15.

Corollary 1. These facts show that they are mistaken who suppose they must necessarily pass through long periods of conviction and distress and delay and doubt before they can come to Christ and be accepted. Awakening and conviction are necessary; but whoever sees and feels that he is a lost sinner, and desires salvation above all things, and sees Jesus as a Savior perfectly suited to his needs, and as the only Savior, and desires to be saved by him, has the privilege to come and cast himself upon him now. Nay, it is his duty. He need not wait for deeper convictions, nor for more poignant grief. Nor need he wait to amend his ways, or to purify his heart. Let him, like the Prodigal, like the hearers at Pentecost, like Saul of Tarsus, come now, just as he is, and rest his soul on Jesus, and be at peace with God, and receive the Holy Spirit, and evermore be a child of God.

Corollary 2. This view also sheds light on many cases where the individual is in doubt as to his conversion. The feeling is, that where such a radical change of heart and mind, as is implied in conversion, takes place, the convert ought to know of it, and of the time when it occurred. But in the case of all those (and they are not few) who were converted in infancy, to recollect the time is plainly impossible. Whoever feels his sinfulness and has found the treasure of salvation in Christ Jesus, and is embracing him as a Savior, and with solicitous care is walking in him, building on him, and laying up his heart with his treasures in heaven, is a converted and a saved soul, whether he can recollect or fix the

time of the great crisis of his change or not. Whoever is receiving and resting on Christ for wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption* is already a child and an heir of God. Let such a one doubt and fear no more, but say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." Sometimes the Sun of righteousness rises so gradually over the gloomy hills of darkness, sometimes the dayspring from on high dawns so gradually upon the soul, that the saved one can scarcely tell when the night ended and the day began.

But this by the way; and we come now to the parable of the pearl of great price—a parable employed to illustrate the anxiety and the earnestness with which salvation is sought by many souls.

Though the Savior came to the pool of Bethesda without solicitation, and unasked wrought his miracle of healing there, yet the Syrophenician woman obtained his gracious intervention only after a journey to find him, after much entreaty, and after seeming rejection and rebuff. We have already directed attention to that condition of Syrian society, in the olden time, which often led men to desire to turn all their property into coin that they might bury it in times of danger, or, as in the text, into a pearl or diamond, which was portable and could be easily concealed. We may easily conceive of the solicitude with which men, in times of uncertainty and danger, would seek to turn all their property into some small and compact equivalent of permanent standard value that they might preserve it.

* 1 Corinthians i. 30.

When a man found the object of his search, it is easy to see with what glad alacrity he would sell all he had to buy it.

Now this is brought to illustrate the anxiety, industry and perseverance with which the awakened sinner seeks the treasures of salvation. As in the insecurity and anxiety of those times the merchant sought to turn his property into a single pearl or diamond, so with the awakened sinner in the matter of his soul's redemption. Let a man be but truly awakened by the Spirit of God to a sense of the vanity of the creature, the worth of the soul, its guilt and danger, the priceless value of the treasure eternal in the heavens, the shortness of life, the nearness of death, and the great realities of the invisible world; let him understand what is meant by the soul's depravity and sinfulness, God's holiness, justice and terrible vengeance, his mercy, love, compassion and gracious fullness and all-sufficiency; what is implied in living under God's wrath and curse for time and eternity, on the one hand, and being filled with all the fullness of his love and blessing for time and eternity, on the other; let him know and realize that he is already lost and helpless and utterly ruined, and that unless in some way rescued, and that speedily, it is all over with him, and that forevermore; and let him, under all these influences, begin in earnest to seek deliverance, have his mind enlightened in the knowledge of Christ; let him come to see that in Christ there is everything he needs; that, if he will but receive and rest upon him as a Savior, he shall be rescued

from all he dreads and be instated in the full and secure possession of all he desires; and let him know and realize that this Savior is freely offered to him—even to such as he—yea, offered to and urged upon him, personally and particularly; and with what eagerness and joy will he embrace the offer!

Let the guilt-burdened soul know of the offer of a free, full and final pardon; tell the soul, sensible of its utter and desperate ungodliness and spiritual maladies, and groaning under them, of Jehovah-ropheka,* the Great Physician—let him know of the Savior, whose free grace stands ready to bestow justification, adoption and sanctification, together with all the inestimable benefits which accompany or flow from these, viz: assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace and perseverance therein to the end, the goodness and mercy of God following and crowning him all his days, strength, safety and victory in the dying hour, immediate admission into the beatific presence of God and his Christ in the celestial Paradise; in due time the resurrection of the body, a triumphant acquittal and justification in the day of judgment, and perfect, ineffable life and blessedness in heaven forever—I say let a man, in such a frame of mind and heart, be illumined by the Holy Spirit into the knowledge of such a Savior, and that this Savior in all his fullness may now be freely his, and oh with what joy does he close in with the gospel call and offer and embrace it, saying of Jesus: "Whom have I in heaven but

* Exodus xv. 26. Jehovah who healeth thee.—Ed.

thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;"* or, with Paul, when renouncing everything for Jesus, he exclaims: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."†

But there are those who become deeply alarmed, and who fear and tremble in view of their guilt and danger. Some awakened sinners experience great, unutterable distress and terror. Some, under the terror inspired by the fear of sin, have become melancholy, some have gone mad, and some, unable longer to endure their harrowing fears, have, with a violent hand, precipitated themselves into that perdition, the mere dread of which made life an insupportable burden. It is well known what gorgeous temples men have erected, what splendid sacrifices they have offered, and what self-inflicted tortures they have endured, for the purpose of appeasing the offended Deity. And indeed nothing is more reasonable than their fears. For nothing hinders their instant and utter and unutterable destruction except the sovereign good pleasure of an offended God. God is able to destroy them, and they deserve to be destroyed. They would even fall into ruin themselves—body and soul would break out into eternal flames, only that God holds them up. God is angry with them—angrier than with many who are already in hell. Devils are waiting for them—hell wants them—earth is weary of them. If they die impenitent, their destruction will be very terrible. God will take pleasure in their punishment,

* Psalm lxxiii. 25. † Philippians iii. 8.

and exert his omnipotence in it. In the inspired Scriptures there are terrible words employed to represent the wrath and vengeance of God in the punishment of incorrigible transgressors. Of Jesus, it is said: "He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."* And again: "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come."† The fierce indignation and terrible punishment thus described are to continue forever. It is the eternity of hell that gives to it its terrors. To lay the hand on a burning coal for fifteen minutes would be dreadful. To be cast into a glowing oven or into a burning limekiln for the same length of time would be more dreadful. But to dwell in the midst of hot, devouring flames forever and ever—the very conception of such a punishment is overwhelming and terrific. But such is the dreadful doom of the lost soul, and the awakened sinner knows it, and sees it, and realizes it. It is brought home with power to his soul. He can not get clear of the terrible fear. It haunts him. It cleaves to him, like a shadow to its substance, like death to sinful men. No wonder he is alarmed. His concern is one of the most reasonable things in the world.

Besides all this, there is additional reason for

* Revelation xix. 15. † Isaiah lxiii. 3, 4.

anxiety on the part of the awakened sinner in the value of heaven's glory and happiness, which he is in danger of losing. Though he be incapable of appreciating the happiness that springs from holiness and from the favor of God and communion with him, he is not altogether indifferent to heaven as a place of rest and peace and joy and glory and bliss, nor as a place of beauty and riches and splendor and everlasting pleasure. He is sometimes enraptured with the conception of it as a glorious city with golden streets and pearly gates and jasper walls, lighted up with the glory of God and the Lamb, and watered with the pure river of life, clear as crystal. When he thinks of these glories and riches and pleasures that are at God's right hand forevermore, and remembers the miseries and horrors of eternal perdition, he feels constrained to seek salvation as a merchantman in ancient times sought for goodly pearls.

But the merchantman would often have to hunt many days, many anxious, weary days, and with many alternations of hope and fear, before obtaining the object of his pursuit. Sometimes worldly men seem to be upon the very point of winning the pearl for which they struggle. Just then their most finely planned efforts prove abortive. Their hopes of years vanish, like a mist of the morning, and leave their once buoyant possessors disappointed and almost despairing to commence the race anew, like Sisyphus doomed of fate to a never-ending, still-beginning toil of rolling a round stone up a high hill—

"With many a weary step and many a groan,
Up the high hill, he heaves the huge round stone;
The huge round stone resulting with a bound
Thunders impetuous down and smokes along the ground."

So it is with the man who rivets his affection to the earth, and builds his hopes on its shifting sands. Rarely does he acquire what he seeks, and not until after many an hour of weary toil.

So does it happen with many awakened and seeking sinners. True, they might come immediately to Christ, and rejoice in the instant possession of the great soul-satisfying salvation. But for causes already noted, many of them do not, but wander in counsels of their own. Being ignorant of God's righteousness or displeased with it, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they attain neither the righteousness nor the rest they seek.

Thus we have discoursed of the two classes represented in these two parables, and pointed out how the Word and Spirit of God operate in different ways on different persons. Some come speedily, and, as it were, unexpectedly into the possession of eternal life. While they are living wholly without God and without hope in the world, content to be aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise; while they were worshiping and serving the creature more than the Creator, fixing their hopes on it instead of on him, God came near in the day of his power and the time of his love, and pulled them out of the fire and saved them.

With another class, as we have seen, it is differ-

ent. They go mourning without the sun. They stand up and cry in the congregation. "They go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but they can not perceive him."* They know not how to find the way into the city. Thus it was for a time with Augustine, Bunyan and Luther.

But whatever diversity there is in the experience of these two classes, previous to the time of discovering the heavenly treasure, still the *discovery* produces the same result in both. They all and with like alacrity sell all they have in order to buy what they know to be so valuable. The reason why men are not Christians is their ignorance of the nature and priceless value of the great salvation. The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, and their understanding is darkened.† No matter what may have been the man's previous history, or how he has come to the knowledge of the truth—if he has by any means come to that knowledge; if his eyes are opened to behold and his heart to realize the truths of revelation—the sin and the misery of men, their doomed and desperate condition, the love of God, the grace of Christ, the goodness of the Spirit, the fullness and freeness of salvation, the horrors of a dark, a burning and an everlasting hell, the life and joy and glory without measure and without end, of that regal and radiant heaven which is reserved for them that know God and obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—I say, if a man has come to such a knowledge as this,

* Job xxiii. 8.
† 2 Corinthians iv. 3. Ephesians iv. 18.

then will he quickly part with everything to secure his eternal salvation. Thenceforward there is to him but one thing needful. Thenceforward he will count all things but loss and veriest ordure that he may be found in Christ, not "Having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."* He will forsake sinful pleasures. He rises above earthly hopes and aims, and becomes a pilgrim indeed. Hitherto he had all his hopes and aims here. They were of the earth, earthy. But now, like the Prodigal, he has come to himself and knows that he has been attempting to fill himself with husks; and, bitterly repenting, he goes and returns to his Father's house. He renounces his own will and way, and resigns himself to the will and the guidance of God.

* Philippians iii. 9.

## SERMON VIII.

# The Parable of the Net.

MATTHEW XIII. 47–50.

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The seine or drag-net (Greek, *sagene;* Latin, *verriculum*) is the largest kind of fishing-net, sometimes half a mile long. It is not used in deep, but shoal waters. It is leaded at the bottom to sink it, and buoyed with cork or other light substance at the top to float it. One end is fastened at the shore, and with the other the fishers sweep around, as far out in the sea as possible, until they bring the whole net with its contents to the shore. Nothing being able to escape through the net, or over it, or under it, all that it incloses is of course hauled out on the beach—fish, good and bad, living and dead, seaweed, floating things, and even poisonous reptiles, that in some places inhabit the bottom of the sea. There would likewise many fish be brought to land that by the Jewish law were unclean; even all those destitute of fins and scales, and these, of course, would be rejected as worthless.* The net being

* Leviticus xi. 9–11.

drawn to the shore, the fishermen sit down, and leisurely discriminate between the fish. The clean and good they gather into vessels, and cast the bad (Greek, *sapra*), dead, decayed, poisonous, worthless and unclean away. They throw them back into the sea, or fling them upon the shore to rot, or to become a prey to the birds of heaven. This picture of the gospel dispensation was one which would be appreciated by several of the disciples, being drawn from their daily avocation.

This parable is in some points similar to that of the tares and the wheat. In both we have an intermixture of the good and bad, their separation by the angels at the end of the world, and the final allotment of each. Probably in the latter the emphasis is laid on the mixture of good and bad in the Church, and in the former on their separation, and the punishment of the wicked.

We now proceed to the interpretation of this parable of the net.

1. We observe, in the first place, that the net symbolizes the Church as an institution of grace. The net was very large, reaching far and sweeping all before it. So the Church, already vastly extended, shall ultimately be coextensive with the habitable world. We may, however, consider the fishers as representing the preachers and the net the preaching of the gospel. The gospel is a net let down to catch men and draw them out of the abyss of ignorance, error and sin in which they live. It is cast into the sea. The sea is the world of mankind, the human race. The gospel net is no more, as under

the Mosaic economy, to be cast into one stream, but into the world-embracing sea. The everlasting gospel of the kingdom is to be preached among all nations. All people are to hear it. All nations are to be affected by it. It is to gather, in its ample sweep, some out of every tongue and every tribe and kindred and people into the kingdom of glory. Such is the prophecy of this parable, and for eighteen hundred years, the all-working hand of Providence has been fulfilling the prediction, and is now more than ever fulfilling it. Wider and wider spreads the gospel, year by year, among the nations, until at length it is reaching and encircling all. Already has it reached and spread, in forms more or less pure, all over the Western hemisphere, which was unknown to science at the time the parable and its prophecy were uttered. Our hills and plains, our mountains and forests, from the snow-clad coasts of Greenland to the wave-washed capes of Patagonia, from the harbors of the Atlantic to the golden coasts of the Pacific, the whole hemisphere is dotted with churches and vocal with the hymns and hallelujahs of redemption. Europe, too, then an almost barbarous and a wholly pagan country, has cast its Thors and its Wodens, its Jupiter and Mars and Juno and Venus, to the moles and bats, and now salutes the cross of Calvary as the symbol of salvation. And long opposed and long repressed, the watchfires of Zion's armies are again rekindled on the fields of Asia. Brightly they burn on the hills of Palestine, in the valleys of Mesopotamia, on the mountains of Per-

sia, on the lowlands of Hindostan, on the coasts of China, and on the isles of the sea. From the gates of Constantinople to the Chinese Wall, from the eternal ice of Siberia to the shores of the Indian Ocean, is the gospel speedily, broadly and successfully going forth, conquering and to conquer, through all that dark land, teeming with millions of benighted men.

Australia, a *terra incognita* in the Savior's day, and a continent in itself, is securely inclosed in the gospel net. So also are many scores and groups of islands in the sunny Pacific; and every year continues to swell the spread and triumphs of the gospel. Every year swells the list of those martyr heroes, honored in heaven, who labor as missionaries among those cannibal savages, and every year demonstrates more and more conclusively that all Polynesia is to be speedily inclosed within the meshes of the gospel net and drawn into the pale of Christian civilization.

Africa, too, is stretching out her hands to God. Already are her sable coasts girded with a zone of gospel light. Liberia and Sierra Leone, Madagascar and the Cape of Good Hope, Egypt and the Barbary States, and many places in the interior—the gospel is invading them all. Our net is cast abroad through all the sea.

2. The figure in our text is one often employed in the Scriptures. The apostles and preachers are again and again called fishers of men. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel employ the same figure to represent the triumphs of the gospel, the restoration and

conversion of Israel's scattered tribes, and the ingathering of souls at the commencement of millennial times.*

2. The figure of the text is an apposite and expressive one. For as the net, in its sweep through the sea, "gathers of every kind"—the good, and also the bad, the putrid, the worthless and the unclean—so the gospel gathers into the Church both converted and unconverted men. It employs motives, arguments and considerations which powerfully address themselves to mankind, and by which many are outwardly influenced, who are never inwardly changed. To the marriage feast the servants gather all, as many as they can find, "both bad and good."† The good seed is sown, but the tares spring up with the wheat and grow with it uutil the time of harvest.‡ There always has been a mixture of the bad and good in the Church. It is not possible by human wisdom and power to prevent it. Church officers can not judge the heart, nor discern the spirits of men. They can look only on the outward appearance.

The time for the final discrimination is not yet. The attempt to have a perfect Church is vain. It can never succeed. The hills of Zion always have been a mingled field of wheat and tares, and will never be anything else until after Christ's second coming. There was a Ham in the ark, an Ishmael in the family of Abraham, a Korah with the Church in the wilderness, a Gehazi in the family of Elisha, a

* Jeremiah xvi. 16. Ezekiel xlvii. 10.
† Matthew xxii. 10. ‡ Matthew xiii. 30.

Judas among the apostles of Christ, and an Elymas and a Demas, and other heretics and hypocrites, in the churches of apostolic planting and of pentecostal life and power; and ever since many have been in the Church who were not of it—many plants in the fields of Zion which our Heavenly Father never planted—many barren branches in Christ which shall be broken off and gathered to be burned—many within the fold who entered not by Christ the door, but climbed up some other way—many who will go to the judgment, pleading with earnestness their connection and communion with the Church, saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" but to whom the Judge will say, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."*

Then let no one be offended at the visible Church because of the imperfections of some or even of many of them. Those things must needs be. They were foreseen and foretold by the Church's Head. Therefore let no one refuse his fellowship on account of them. Be not disturbed because you suspect an unworthy man or woman sits beside you at the communion table, for you may be mistaken. Perhaps he is a better man than you suppose. Perhaps he stands fairer in God's sight than he does in yours—perhaps fairer than you. But if indeed he is as bad as you judge, or even worse, be not driven away, be not alienated. His unworthiness affects only himself. His sitting unworthily at the com-

* Matthew vii. 22, 23.

munion table does not cut off the children's right to eat their Father's bread, and to eat it quietly, cheerfully, and with an assurance of welcome. But if we must have a perfect Church, we must be out of the Church on earth. If we will tolerate only a perfect communion, then we can have no communion this side of heaven.

True, the ideal of the Church is perfection, and to this she tends. She is continually purging herself of those who are known and notorious sinners. But in regard to this she has received many a warning to be careful lest in plucking up the tares, she should root up the wheat also. 'It is better that many doubtful persons should be tolerated through charity than that one of God's children should be unjustly excluded from his Father's house. And that man, or body of men, whether it be pope, conclave, assembly, conference, synod or session, that assumes to exclude those whom Jesus has received, takes too much upon them. They lord it, with an impious hand, over God's heritage. They sit as God in the temple of God, showing themselves that they are God. Wherever the gospel is preached, and men make "a credible profession of faith in Christ and of obedience unto him," they are to be received in all charity as brethren in Christ. If some of them are unworthy —are in reality unrenewed—but have not such open blemishes as are absolutely incompatible with Christian character, still they are to be borne with. The day of strict and final discrimination is not yet. Nor are ministers to be the arbiters in such cases.

These men are to be left to the judgment of God. They are drifting on to those eternal shores, where the good shall be gathered into vessels and the bad be cast away. Until then let us wait. Let us also guard against making terms of communion which God never made, and shrink from it as from shocking impiety. Let us remember that the Lord is our Judge, King and Lawgiver.

Nor is the imperfection of Christian professors any argument against the truth of Christianity. Christianity does not make men imperfect. It finds them so, and as far as it brings them under its influence, it makes them better, transforming them from one degree of holiness to another continually. It finds them immersed in the darkness of ignorance and sin, and makes their path like the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. It finds them led and driven by fierce and restless passions, and it curbs and subdues them, and transfers their attachments from low and unworthy objects to those which are high and holy and sublime and eternal. It finds one a drunkard, and sobers him; another a debauchee, and purifies him. It finds one an earthworm, and ennobles him, and another dishonest, and makes him upright. And now because it does not complete its whole work in an instant, but carries on its renovating and redeeming processes gradually, and in accordance with the known laws of our nature, is this a reason for rejecting it? Or, because some men profess it, who do so in bad faith, and do never in very truth yield themselves up, heart and soul, to be guided and

molded by its influences, and so are never morally improved by them, is this a reason for infidelity? "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?"* What! the imperfection of Christians and the unworthiness of false professors a ground for rejecting the Christian Church and the Christian religion? This very imperfection was predicted by the great Author of salvation, and rightly considered is a strong argument to prove that this religion is from heaven. It must be from heaven, or the frailty and the follies of men would have destroyed it long ago. Those frailties and follies have destroyed states and ruined empires. They have turned cities into solitudes and fat lands to barrenness. They have broken to shivers all the proudest monuments of human genius and greatness. State after state, empire after empire, has risen, flourished and fallen. History records their greatness, and also the follies and crimes by which they were ruined. Innumerable forms of religion and systems of philosophy have sprung into being and risen into greatness, and vanished into smoke. No human institution, no system, no civilization, has ever yet been able to stand against the follies, the corruptions, and the crimes of men. The Church alone lives. The Jerusalem of God only is immortal. There she stands, old as Paradise; fresh as youth; immortal as God, and strong as the pillars of heaven. Embracing both hemispheres, one foot on either pole, her height reaching to heaven, her sight to the ends

* Romans iii. 3.

of the earth, she lives, she stands, she grows. She has outweathered the storms of six thousand years, and like the unyielding arch has grown stronger by the weight that has sought to crush her. No internal follies, crimes, treasons and perjuries; no external craft, hate and deadly war, have ever been able to effect a deadly breach in her walls. While revolution or crime has in time swept away everything human, like chaff before the whirlwind, into the deep vortex of destruction, the Church, like an immovable mountain, still stands proudly erect, and defies the storm. Never was she so strong, so pure, so great, so progressive, so victorious, as at the present moment. Never! Never did she yield so mighty or so wide an influence as to-day. Never was she so strong in the respect and affections of men, in the general intelligence, purity, integrity and public spirit of her members, or in the extent, variety and efficacy of her resources as at this very time. Zion, after a sleep of ages, has arisen, shaken herself from the dust, and shines. The nations see her from afar. Kings come to her light, and queens to the brightness of her rising. Now why is Zion thus immortal? Why is she alone of all human things immortal? Why have the causes which have destroyed all other institutions not injured her? Why, like the three holy children, does she walk unscathed in the midst of the fires? Why, like the ark, is she able to outride the deluge and defy the storm? Why can she laugh at those moral convulsions which rock the world like an earthquake and swallow up all human

institutions? It is because she is from heaven, and because she is sustained by Jehovah's almighty arm.

"God is our refuge and our strength,
In straits a present aid,
And therefore though the earth remove,
We will not be afraid—

"Though hills amidst the seas be cast;
Though waters roaring make,
And troubled be; yea, though the hills
By swelling seas do shake—

"A river is whose streams make glad
The city of our God;
The holy place wherein the Lord
Most High hath his abode.

"God in the midst of her doth dwell,
And nothing shall her move;
God also very early will
To her a helper prove."*

4. But the Church, though imperfect, containing both believers and unbelievers, saints and sinners, will not be imperfect always. When the gospel net is full, it will be drawn to the shore. When the scheme of redemption is consummated, then shall the present economy of grace come to an end. The heavens shall vanish. The trumpet shall sound. The living shall be changed, and the dead raised. Our glorious Jesus will come in glory, and all the holy angels with him, and he will send his angels to gather the good home to heaven and to cast the bad away.

(1.) That there will be a day of general judgment—of discrimination between the righteous and

* Psalm xlvi.

the wicked—the Holy Word permits us not to doubt. "Because God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."* And again: "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."† See also Revelation xx. 12, 13. Matthew xxv. 31–46.

(2.) But why spend time on a point so plain? I proceed to remark that the holy angels will act as God's ministers in the final separation of the righteous from the wicked. Our text declares that "at the end of the world, the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." See also Matthew xxv. 41. Awful separation, and awful casting away! Strange scenes shall be witnessed on that day. Many shall be gathered home to heaven, whom we had hardly expected to meet there; and many shall be cast away of whom we had confidently expected better things. The secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. Hearts and souls shall be turned inside out, and be exposed to the gaze of the whole universe. Some of us, of whom others stood in doubt, shall be shown, notwithstanding all our many and grievous infirmities to have really and

* Acts xvii. 31. † John v. 28, 29.

truly exercised repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And I tremble to think that some of us, of whom we are all thinking better things, may then be found destitute of inward grace, and so come short of the heavenly glory and be cast away.

After the separation shall have been made, the good, that is, Christians, true believers, shall be gathered home to heaven to dwell with God and Christ and the holy angels forever and ever. But the bad, unbelievers, the impenitent, shall be cast away from all the means of grace, from all hopes of salvation, from all the pleasures of time, from God, from peace, rest, and hope. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."*

But I must hasten to the conclusion of this discourse.

And is it indeed true that many, who are taken by the gospel net and gathered within its folds, shall be cast away at last? Is it probable, or even possible, that some of us—of us who are so highly favored—who have witnessed a good profession before many witnesses, who have been church-members for months, or even years, who have been washed with the sacred waters of baptism, who have eaten the sacramental bread, who have been fed on manna from heaven, who have sat in the same house and in the same pews with the heirs of salvation, have had the same teaching, heard the same offers, and listened to the same entreaties as

* Matthew xxv. 46.

they—is it probable, or even possible, that some of us, who have been thus favored, shall be cast away at last? Is it probable, or even possible, that all our glorious light is to go out in everlasting darkness, all our pleasures to be exchanged for everlasting agonies, all our bright hopes to be swallowed in the abyss of deep and endless despair? Shall all our Sabbaths and sermons and sacraments, all our prayers and praises and sweet communing, so soon and so bitterly end forever? My friends, the bare thought of this as possible should fill you with a holy alarm and horror. You should carefully and prayerfully examine into the foundation of your hopes—you should examine and prove yourselves whether you be in the faith—you should know of a surety whether Jesus Christ be formed in you the hope of glory, lest in the end you be found to be reprobates. Let your hopes of heaven rest on no doubtful foundation. Make your calling and election sure. Do not lie supinely and sing the syren song of *peace* to lull the soul into a fatal torpor from which the dark-winged angel of death shall fearfully and finally arouse it. Rest not until you are able to say, with Paul: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day;"* or, with Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."†

It is not too much to say that many are now in

* 2 Timothy i. 12. † Job xix. 25, 26.

hell because they rested in a false hope and refused to examine it, or to be alarmed out of it. And so it will be with you, if you build upon a sandy foundation. You may close your ears against this friendly warning and sleep on, but not forever. The time hurries, when "the sinners in Zion shall be afraid, when fearfulness shall surprise the hypocrites. Who among *us* shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"* Awful change from earth to hell; from the songs of the sanctuary to the groans and howling of the pit; from hopes of heaven to blank and bottomless despair; from the cheerful light of heaven to outer darkness, and to wailing and gnashing of teeth.

But why do I interpret this parable as if it referred only to the members of the Church? I doubt not it includes all who live in gospel lands, all to whom the gospel comes. To whomsoever the word of life comes, it lays hold of him with an awful and an everlasting power. He can never shake himself loose from its influence. He can never be the same man, be in the same condition, or have the same prospects as before. "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life."† The same sermon that brings conviction, conversion, life, light and joy to the soul of one, hardens and darkens the heart of another, deepens the pit

*Isaiah xxxiii. 14. † 2 Corinthians ii. 15, 16.

for him, and shuts him up more inevitably to utter destruction. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."* The gospel net has been cast forth upon all the people of this audience, of this community, of this country. It has laid hold upon them all with an invisible and deathless power. It is silently, but surely, molding their character and destiny for eternity. It is swiftly and irresistibly dragging them on to judgment. "Whether for good or for evil—whether for acquittal or condemnation—whether to be gathered among the pure in heaven, or cast among the guilty in hell, they can not for an instant arrest their progress to the judgment toward which they are being carried from the first moment the offer of salvation in the gospel was made them."

How different the condition and destiny of the two classes inclosed in the gospel net! The one good, the other bad; the one heirs of glory, honor, immortality, eternal life, the other of indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; the one gathered by the angels into their everlasting heavenly home, the other cast into the furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

* Isaiah lv. 10, 11.

## SERMON IX.

# The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant.

MATTHEW XVIII. 23–35.

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In the preceding verses, Jesus had been discoursing of the way in which we should deal with offenders, and the kindness and leniency which should be shown to weak and erring brethren. To forgive a personal wrong was confessedly a duty, but it seems there was a controversy among the Jewish sects in relation to the question, how often we ought to forgive, upon profession of repentance, an erring brother? The Jewish Rabbins are said to have decided the question thus: that three trangressions are to be forgiven, but not the fourth; and this they attempted to prove by referring to Amos i. 3. Peter put the numbers three and four together, or perhaps some of the Rabbins did, and asked whether we are to forgive until seven times; or perhaps he inferred from Proverbs xxiv. 16, that we ought to forgive seven times. Our Savior in his answer to Peter's

question (verse 22) intimates that we are always to forgive—that there is no amount of personal wrong which can be done unto us, which we are not to forgive; and that if we will be his disciples we are not to cherish or indulge a proud, revengeful, uncompromising or implacable disposition; but that, on the contrary, we are as far as possible to live at peace with all men—that if they will war with us, we are not to war with them, nor return railing for railing, wrong for wrong, injury for injury, but to cherish and cultivate the lovely graces of meekness and gentleness and patience and long-suffering; and that we must, even under provocation, love our enemies.

But as this was a lesson which was contrary to all the propensities of their vitiated nature, and to all the teachings which they had received from infancy, and to the maxims and principles of the whole world; and as it was absolutely essential for men to learn to practice it in order to entitle them to the character and standing of discipleship, our Lord proceeds to explain and enforce the duty by the parable under consideration.

1. We have *first* the literal sense. A king is represented as calling his agents and officers to a settlement, and one of them is found to be delinquent to a very great amount—ten thousand talents, about fifteen millions of dollars. (Verse 24.) But he, having nothing to pay, his lord, according to the custom of some Oriental countries, commanded that he, his wife, children, and all that he had, should be sold, and payment to be made. But at the entreaty

of the defaulter, his debt is forgiven, and he is set at liberty. But afterward, by refusing to forgive his fellow-servant a paltry debt of a hundred pence, about fifteen dollars, and dealing harshly and cruelly with the poor debtor, he incurs his master's displeasure, and is delivered to the tormentors till he should pay the entire debt.

2. Let us now look into the *spiritual* sense of the parable.

The administration of the government of the spiritual kingdom, the visible Church, by our Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head thereof, is declared to be similar to this. "The king" (verse 23) represents our Savior, the only king, head, judge, lawgiver and governor of the Church. The king calling his servants to account represents the Lord Jesus, as the king and judge of his people, calling them to account. The large amount which the defaulter owed (about fifteen millions of dollars) represents the number and magnitude of our sins. Sin is often compared to a debt. Luke vii. 41–48. Matthew vi. 12. The number and value of the talents (ten thousand) represent the number and greatness of our sins. Not only are our sins very numerous, but *each* sin is *very great*, "deserving God's wrath and curse, both in this life and in that which is to come." The defaulter was delinquent to the king for six hundred thousand* times as

* So reads the MS. of Dr. D. But as he gives the value of ten thousand talents as about fifteen millions of dollars, and as the penny (denarius) was worth only about fifteen cents, the defaulter was delinquent to the king for fifteen thousand times as much as his fellow-servant was indebted to him.—Ed.

much as his fellow-servant was indebted to him, by which is intimated that the wrongs which our fellow-men do to us, great and outrageous as they sometimes are, bear no proportion to the wrongs which we commit against God. We can wrong our fellow-men only in proportion to the extent of the claim which they have on us. The wrong done is always in proportion to the magnitude and perfection of the claim which we violate. Thus parents or benefactors have a much stronger claim upon our grateful regards than a stranger or an enemy, and to treat them injuriously would be a much greater sin. Every sin is great just in proportion to the greatness of obligation resting upon us not to perpetuate it. Now as the claims which God has upon our obedience and regards are great just in proportion to the greatness of his authority and perfections and benefactions, and as each of these is infinite, it follows that there is a triple infinity of claim on God's part and of obligation on ours. Hence to violate our obligations to God by sinning against his authority, perfections and goodness is to rend asunder a threefold cord of infinite obligation, and has, therefore, a threefold iniquity of demerit. Well, therefore, is it compared in this parable to an astounding and hopeless debt which can never be paid.

The inability of the servant to pay his enormous debt, and the slavery of himself and family, together with the confiscation of his goods, represent the strictness of the law and justice of God, and the utter inability of men to make satisfaction for their

many and great sins. In the hour of conviction, when his many and great sins are placed before him, in all their dark and hideous deformity, reduced to despair and made fully sensible of his utter inability to appease the offended law and justice of God, the sinner smites upon his breast and cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner."* He has nothing to plead but mercy—free, gracious forgiveness, for Jesus' sake. He feels that he never can pay the debt—that he never can make satisfaction for his sins, and therefore says, "O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant."† But some there are, and I fear many, who never have had conviction reach the height which we have just now described. They have felt themselves to be sinners, and, it may be, too, very great sinners, but still their convictions have not led them totally to despair of securing the divine favor through their own righteousness. They feel that the case is bad with them, but not hopeless. They flatter themselves that by diligence in time to come, they will be able to reconcile themselves to their offended Lord, and that he will be pleased, for the sake of their present performance of wearisome works and duties, to pardon their past delinquencies.‡ Notwithstanding their error is radical and great, they congratulate themselves on their efforts and success. It would be an exceedingly ungracious and utterly hopeless task to convince them of their mistake and danger. Generally such persons pursue their course of legal endeavor and pride, until the

* Luke xviii. 13. † Psalm cxliii. 2.
‡ Romans x. 2–10.

day of judgment shows them that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.

But although it is very difficult to convince the legalist of the impossibility of salvation by human merit, and that his hopes are delusive and vain, still it is not very difficult to detect the man himself. Usually it happens that the experienced child of God can detect that in his life, which is contrary to the reality and purity of Christian character; and, perhaps, in nothing more readily than in the harshness and censoriousness of his judgments concerning others, and in his vindictive and revengeful conduct—in his long retaining the recollection of injuries, real or imagined, and in the many acts of unkindness and pharisaical arrogance which he unmercifully perpetrates against weak Christians, who through the manifold infirmities which unhappily encompass them, have been led at some particular time, or perhaps repeatedly, to do them wrong. It is precisely such a character that is sketched in verses 26–30. He was convinced of sin, but not so convinced but that he thought he could relieve himself. "Have patience with me, and *I will pay thee all.*" His convictions are very deep and his distress very great. He prays—overwhelmed with grief and fear—*he falls down* and prays. But still he expects to pay all the debt. Here is no such prayer as that of the justified publican—"Lord, be merciful to me a sinner," but, "Lord, have patience." And as God often in Scripture speaks of men as if they were what they profess to be, or suppose themselves to be, he speaks of this man as if he were already

forgiven, not because he really was forgiven, but just as he calls the polluted Jerusalem the holy city, even after it was stained with the blood of the Son of God, not because it really was a holy city, but because it professed and supposed itself to be such. The passage viewed in this light affords not the slightest ground to the doctrine of a conditional pardon, as some have hastily supposed. God speaks of the sinner in the parable as pardoned, because those who are what he professed and for a time seemed to be, are pardoned, and because he supposed himself to be so.

Verse 31. We are here taught that the harsh, overbearing, untender conduct of the nominal professor is cause of much grief to the pious, and that they go to God in earnest and hearty prayer, and complain of the dishonor done to the gospel.

Verses 32–35. We here learn that men will be dealt with, not according to their profession, nor according to what they suppose themselves to be, but according to their works. Especially are we here taught that the fault-finding and censorious and malicious and unforgiving and ungracious, who are exacting and hard with the poor and distressed, or with weak and halting Christians, who have offended them, will not themselves be forgiven that infinitely greater debt which is charged against them in the book of God's remembrance; but they shall be exactly and severely dealt with; that they shall be meted with their own measure and judged after their own manner; that the cup which they have filled for others shall be filled to them double, and

that they shall be delivered over to the tormentors, and be led away to the prison of hell, and kept there until they have paid all the debt.

"So likewise" (says the Savior) "shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

Now, my friends, are there none of us who need to learn and to lay to heart the lesson of this day? Is there among the professors before me all that amenity and urbanity, all that kindness and confidence, all that warm and full flow of affection which is so essential to Christian character? Are we all subject to one another, each esteeming the other better than himself? Is it indeed so that each in love prefers the other, and is each one ready, if called to it, to lay down his life for the brethren? Is there no want of confidence or affection in the bosom of any of you? Is there no one who, Diotrephes-like, would rejoice to have the pre-eminence among his brethren? Is there no haughty and supercilious contempt for the judgment and feelings of others who differ from you? Is there no disposition to be exacting and rigid when you have received what you are pleased to construe into a personal insult or injury?

Once more: I think this parable is calculated to impress the mind with the importance of obtaining an interest in Christ Jesus. Everything about it, I think, points to this end, though its special design is to warn us against the danger of an irascible, implacable, unforgiving temper. What else shall we

infer from the immensity of the debt, the wrath of the king, and the fearful imagery of the thirty-fourth verse, which almost makes one stand still and hold his breath to read it. "And his lord was WROTH, and delivered him over to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him." It is said in the preceding verses that he owed an immense sum, and had nothing with which to pay it. It was impossible that he should pay the debt with nothing. Yet he is delivered over to the TORMENTORS until he should perform this impossibility; that is, he was doomed to be tormented forever. Thus it is shown that Universalism is a horrible cheat, and the everlasting destruction of impenitent sinners an awful reality. *Awful,* I say, if we consider who these tormentors are and the eternity of their inflictions. For if there is fierceness in the hungry, deathless worm which wraps its shining coils in the utmost core of the writhing soul and gnaws with insatiate fury forever at its bleeding, quivering life-strings—if there is heat in the molten center of that lake of liquid fire, which, maddened by the adverse fury of ten thousand storms, tosses and whirls the cindered soul upon its boiling bosom, now burying it deep beneath, now dashing it aloft against hell's dark and brazen concave, only that it may recoil in a deeper plunge and be hurled up with a more crushing dash than before—if there be madness of misery in the clashing chains and gnashing fangs and iron jaws and bursting groans, and loud, ceaseless, infernal yells of devils and spirits damned, as they grasp and tear and batten on "the debtor doomed"—or if

there be strength in the great arm of the almighty justice of the wrathful King; then, the destruction of the doomed debtor, the impenitent sinner, is an awful reality, from which, I pray God, of his abundant mercy, for Jesus' sake, to save me and all who hear me.

## SERMON X.

# The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard.

MATTHEW XX. 1–16.

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This, with the exception of the parable of the unjust steward, is the most difficult of all the parables of the New Testament. It is intimately connected with the preceding context. This connection is expressed by the word "for" of the first verse. A young man had come to the Savior, inquiring what he must do that he might have eternal life. The Savior tries him and proves to him, and to all, that he was not sufficiently in earnest. From this incident the Savior points out the dangers of wealth. Chapter xix. 16–26. Peter seeing the young man's failure, and contrasting his own history with that of the young man, rejoiced inwardly at the difference, and exclaimed: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" The feeling in Peter's mind was nearly allied to pride, vanity, ambition, and self-righteousness. He asked the question, being persuaded of the

merit of himself and his confreres. The Savior graciously overlooks what was wrong in the spirit of the question, and gives assurance to him, and to all, of abundant recompense—a recompense abundant even in this life, but especially abundant in the life to come. Men and brethren, we serve a good Master. No one ever lost anything by cleaving to God. It is by departing from him that we lose all.

But there was a wrong and dangerous spirit manifested in Peter's question—a spirit of pride, vanity, ambition, and self-righteousness. To reprove this, and to rid Peter and all the disciples of it, he adds the caution contained in the thirtieth verse: "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." The first word of this sentence, the adversative conjunction, indicates that there is another view to be taken of this matter. This view is illustrated and enforced in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard.

The doctrine of this parable is, that the rewards of heaven are *of grace, not of debt;* are a gift, not an obligation. God is a debtor to no man. It further teaches that in the bestowment of his favors God acts in an absolutely sovereign way. He divides to every man severally as he will—does that which is well pleasing in his own sight, and gives no account of his matters to any one. Further, still, the parable makes it evident that he is *justified in so doing*, and that no creature has any right to complain.

EXPOSITION.

1. "The vineyard" is the Church. Psalm lxxx.

Isaiah v. Matthew xxi. "The householder" is God. He is the great owner of all—the great Father of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is called. He has a great work to do in our hearts, in the Church, and in the world; and in the accomplishment of it he employs many servants. He employs them, not because he needs them, not because they in any way facilitate the attainment of his ultimate purpose. He could convert all nations, edify the Church, sanctify all saints, destroy Satan and all his works, by the omnipotent breathing of his mouth, and as well without our aid as with it. But it is in accordance with his wisdom to employ us as instruments, and he has made it for our profit.

2. "The laborers" are apostles, ministers, officers, and all Christians. For we are all a kingdom of priests. 1 Corinthians xv. 8–11. Acts xx. 20–28. 1 Peter ii. 9. I say all Christians are laborers. Every one has a work to do in his heart, house and neighborhood, in the Church and the world—we are lighted candles—we are the salt of the earth—we are to do all the glory of God—we are soldiers of the cross, fighting in the cause of Christ—we are all to be fellow-laborers, to reap and to sow, to look on the things of others, to have our conversation with grace.

This work of ours is a *great work.* It is for God, for souls, for eternity. It is an honorable work. We are fellow-laborers with God, with Christ, with the Holy Spirit, with angels, with all the sacramental, blood-washed host. It is a work on honor-

able *materials*, and with honorable purposes and results. Moreover, it is a legitimate work—the work for which we were created and converted and sanctified—the only work really we have to do —our being's end and aim.

3. "To hire." Our conversion comes from God. We love him because he first loved us. The reason of our hope to-day is, that God hath thought upon us in our low and lost estate. His passing by was a time of love. If we have come to him it is because he had called us by *a persuasive and irresistible call.* The love of Christ hath pleasantly and preciously constrained us. The "hiring" here is synonymous with the "calling" in the sixteenth verse, and this call is not the common call of the gospel, but that gracious, sweet, all-prevailing call of the Spirit, which to the saved accompanies the outward preaching of the gospel. The word "called"* has always this meaning in the New Testament. Romans i. 1, 6, 7; viii. 28. 1 Corinthians i. 1, 2, 24. The participle "calling" has also invariably this meaning. Also the verb *kaleo* has almost always this meaning. I believe there are only two exceptions, and in these it signifies the mere preaching of the word.

Note, then, the Christian's obligation to be humble and thankful. Instead of claiming a *reward of debt*, on the contrary, by how much he is holy and fruitful, by so much is he a debtor to God "who has made him to differ," and who has "wrought in him

* Greek, *kletos*, verbal adjective.

all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power."

4. "For a penny a day." The Roman *denarius* (translated penny) was equivalent to about fifteen cents of our money—liberal wages for a day's work in ancient times.

The penny, given as a reward for the labor, is God himself and all the blessings of the covenant of redemption. It is a favorite form of expression with the Sacred Scriptures to represent these blessings as a *reward:* "Verily there is a reward to the righteous." Psalm lviii. 11. Matthew v. 12. Luke vi. 35. John iv. 36. Hebrews xi. 6.

Note, however, that this reward is always represented as a reward of grace—of rich, free, sovereign grace. Romans iv. 4. Romans x. 1–10. Galatians iv. 4. Even grace to labor is from God. 1 Corinthians iv. 7. Besides, there can be no proportion between the labor and the wages. There is no merit at all in the labor performed, but the recompense is infinite and eternal. Oh, the depth of the love and the goodness of God!

5. "Agreed." They must have an agreement, a compact. They could not trust him, and would not go without it. Here already we find the spirit which comes out and culminates in verses 10–12. How much better to have gone with love and confidence, to have gone, as did those subsequently hired, simply confiding in God that he would do that which was right by them, and that they would never, never be the losers by him.

Still, notwithstanding this narrow spirit, they

*were Christians*, not pretenders. They were laborers, not idlers. Their labor was accepted, no fault being found with it, and they were rewarded for it, just as those who went into the vineyard to labor, without making an agreement in regard to their wages. Further, Peter and all like him, who are reproved in the parable, are Christians, such Christians as the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son—of legal and narrow turn of mind.

6. "A day." This designates the period of activity from conversion until death. We are to labor for God, in the vineyard and out of it, until the end of life. There will never be a time when we may relax our labors. But then it is *only* for a day—a set time—and if our work is not done during that time, it will never be done, and we will fail of our reward forever. "A day" is a short time, therefore we should be diligent. We should gird up the loins of our mind. We should lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race set before us. We should not entangle ourselves with any burden or hindrance.

7. "Sent them into his vineyard." The owner of the vineyard sent the laborers into it to labor, to labor all day, to labor for *him*. The Lord places Christians in his Church to work, to work for him, as long as life shall last. It may be objected that the Christians are few, and that there are many pretenders. We answer, yes, the Bible so represents it, as in the parable of the *tares and the wheat*, and that of the great *net*, in the thirteenth chapter of

Matthew. And now that it is so, what of it? What are you going to do about it? Will this fact be of any service to you? True, it is a fact; but it is one which should alarm you. You should see to it that you yourself are not among the idlers and the castaways; that you should not be found naked and rewardless and destitute when the night cometh.

8. *He went out at the third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hours.* Some make *the different hours* the main point of the parable. Not correct; see chapter xix., verse 30. Others interpret the different hours as the different calls which God has given to men in different ages of the world, as by Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Christ. Incorrect again; for the call is not common, but the effectual call. See verses 4–6. Besides, according to this interpretation, there could have been no murmuring in the case; for how could those of ancient times have murmured at the superior blessings bestowed on the Church in these latter ages, since they were ignorant of them. Still further, this interpretation is not to the point in hand. The design of the parable was to reprove Peter and his associates for the spirit manifested by them in their question. Matthew xix. 27.

Others again interpret the parable as relating to the Jews and Gentiles. Wrong. For, in the first place, this interpretation has no countenance from the context. It was not the Jewish nation, but Peter and all believers of a similar spirit, that are reproved in this parable. In the second place, as the great body of the Jewish Church, even the true

believers among them, had too much of that self-complacent and self-righteous spirit, which is here reproved, the parable applies indeed to them, but by no means to them only.

Once more: there are some who interpret the hours in the parable as designating the different periods of life at which men are converted to God, as childhood, youth, manhood, old age, and near death. It is indeed true that men are converted at all those periods. But then not all early converts are filled with a self-righteousness and boasting spirit, nor are all late converts free from it.

The true interpretation is, *that the rewards and promotions of glory are distributed not according to seniority, nor according to the measure of men, but according to the holy and wise sovereignty of God, who giveth to every man, severally as he will, and who doeth all things well.*

But observe none were hired at the twelfth hour. If death comes upon us before conversion, then are we forever lost. There is no help then. Let none procrastinate. The parable gives no encouragement to that. Those who do so, can not say: "We are idle, because no man hath hired us." They have all along *refused to be hired.* Such persons are in great danger. Sins are accumulating most fearfully. God is provoked. The Spirit is resisted and grieved; conscience and the remains of the religious nature are more and more wounded and weakened; lust and all indwelling sin grow apace; the soul, under a felt burden of guilt and degradation, is becoming more and more estranged from God; and Satan and the

world are more and more increasing their power over it for evil and for ruin. Procrastination is dangerous and *generally fatal.*

9. "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" All is lost time and labor, except that which is spent in serving God and living to his glory. For all that, and for that only, shall we reap a reward of glory in eternity.

10. *The reckoning.* "Saith unto the steward, Call the laborers and give them their hire." The steward is Christ, who judges and rewards. Hebrews iii. 6. John v. 22, 27. The reckoning took place "when even was come." So soon as Christians die, they enter on their reward. To die is gain to them. To be with Christ is far better, in every sense far better, than to remain in this world. The day of death is hence better to the Christian than the day of birth. Hence when death comes, we should hail it with joy, with rejoicings, and transports. Death is the voice of the Savior calling us from toil to rest, from labor to reward. Christ will then give us the penny, our hire, even God himself,* and all the joys and glories of the life to come.

Hence, too, should we be comforted in the loss of Christian friends. They have entered into life and light and love ineffable. We should not mourn as those who have no hope. We should not say of them "they are no more," but, rather, "they have just begun to be."

11. *The reward.* "Beginning from the last unto

* Genesis xv. Psalm xvi. 5.

the first." They all receive the same reward, God or the blessing of the covenant of grace. But this does by no means imply an equality of glory and happiness in heaven. For though the same reward is given to all, all are not equally capable of enjoying it—each enjoys according to his capacity, and capacities differ. The capacity of each for enjoyment is "according to the measure of the stature of fullness in Christ"—according to the fullness of his participation of the divine life here. All are full, but all contain not alike. All shine with the same light, but not with the same breadth of disk.

This fullness of growth in Christ is not in proportion to the length of time we have been Christians, but, rather, in proportion to the rapidity of our growth, or to both combined. And this again is all attributable to the free gift of sovereign grace. Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, O Lord, be the glory.

12. *The murmuring.* How is this consistent with the character and state of the saved? How can it be said that the glorified murmur? We answer, that it is not consistent. The glorified do not murmur. The parable does not prophesy this; but it pictures forth the terrible evil that was working in Peter and the others, and shows to what it would naturally lead. Nor was the lesson unnecessary. How much harm has that evil principle of pride and self-complacency always wrought in the world! How has it injured individuals and marred the glory of churches!

13. *The justification.*

(1.) There was no wrong done to the individual, but an abundant reward conferred.

(2.) The sovereignty of God in the bestowment of favors. Doubtless the great God has good reasons for all he does and for all the differences he makes; but still he is not bound to state his reasons to us, and often does not state them. He is a law unto himself, but knows no other law, recognizes no other responsibilitity.

## SERMON XI.

# The Parable of the Two Sons.

MATTHEW XXI. 28–33.

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1. The chief priests and elders of the people came to our Savior, as he was teaching in the temple, and inquired by what authority he acted. Verse 23. They had a right, as the heads of the Church, to investigate the character and claims of those who went forth, as teachers, among the flock committed to their care. The inquiry was therefore, in itself, a proper one.

2. The inquirers, however, were insincere. Christ's doctrines, miracles, and life had already sufficiently declared who he was. But they wished to entangle him. Would he be silent? Then they would publish him as a convicted and cowardly traitor. Would he speak and claim the Messianic office? Then they would accuse him of blasphemy.

3. Jesus answers by asking them a question, which covers them with embarrassment and difficulty. How easy for God to disappoint the devices of his enemies, and turn them against themselves.

He makes their own sword enter their own heart. He takes them in their own snare. They fall into their own pit; for example, the temptation of our first parents by Satan, the crucifixion of Christ, the persecution about Stephen, the career of Julian, and the infidel attacks on the Bible.

4. Opposition to Christians and to Christianity is opposition to Christ, and he will now and always foil it.

5. "We can not tell," say the baffled priests and elders. Verse 27. Oh, how tortuous and troublous are the ways of sin! How plain and safe the path of duty.

*The parable reproves these insincere inquirers, and shows them their danger.*

1. The immediate application is to the Pharisees and publicans; but the general principle applies to all similar classes of men. All the unconverted world is divided into these two classes of Pharisees and publicans.

2. "*Had two sons.*" Verse 28. Both Pharisees and publicans were the sons of God by federal relation—both were the sons of Abraham, and were circumcised. Unconverted children are the sons of God by federal relation. They and all men are the sons of God by creation and preservation.

3. "*Go work.*" Children must work for their parents—all men for God.

4. "*In my vineyard.*" Our heart is a vineyard, to be cultivated for God. Proverbs xxiv. 30. The Church is a vineyard. Psalm lxxx. Isaiah v. Matthew xx.

5. "*To-day.*" During this life. Hebrews iii. 7–15. 1 Thessalonians v. 5–8. This life is our day of opportunity. When it is ended, our opportunities are ended. Luke xvi. 25–31.

6. "*Work to-day.*" All day—during the whole life. Life is given for this purpose. The labor to be performed is great and difficult. The world, Satan and indwelling sin oppose and hinder the Christian in its performance. Ephesians vi. 13–17.

7. "*Work to-day.*" *Now*, without delay. Ecclesiates ix. 10. Matthew xxii. 4. God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, all are ready now. The command is to begin to labor at once. Delay is dangerous.

8. "*Son, work.*" Authority and affection—authority of the great God—affection from Him, against whom we have so deeply revolted—affectionate command as coming from a loving heart, as enjoining that which is for our good, and as accompanied with the necessary aids of grace. Malachi iii. 17. Psalm ciii. 13–17.

9. (*a*) This work is *necessary*. Without it we shall be lost—without it vice and misery in the soul and the world will ever increase. (*b*) It is a *good, happy work*—it makes the soul like God and the world like heaven. (*c*) It is an honorable work—in it we are associated with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, angels and saints. (*d*) It is a legitimate work—all other legitimate work is only subsidiary to it.

10. The command, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard," is to all. Proverbs viii. 4. Isaiah lv. 1. Matthew xxviii. 19. Not only Scripture calls and commands all; but the whole course of creation

and providence does the same. Psalm xix. 1–6. Romans i. 20. Acts xiv. 17.

11. "*He answered and said, I will not.*" One class of the unconverted, at once and absolutely, refuse to obey. This class includes not only the publicans and harlots of all countries and times, and all such as are represented by the prodigal son (Luke xv.), but all those who openly reject the claims of the gospel—such as have no delight in God's work, live only for this present life, live to themselves and for themselves, afar from God.

12. "*But afterward he repented, and went.*" Some of the worst sinners repent, believe the gospel, and are saved.

13. "*I go, sir, and went not.*" This represents the following classes:

(1.) Those apparently pious in childhood and youth who turn out badly afterward.

(2.) Professors who promise well for a time, and then in an hour of trial give way and come to nothing.

(3.) Moralists and Pharisees who trust in their own righteousness.

14. "*The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom before you.*" The former class, hardened as they seem, are more likely to be saved than the latter. The causes are as follows:

(1.) The miseries of a life of coarse sin powerfully reclaim against it.

(2.) In their misery they are awakened to a longing after something better.

(3.) Their felt guilt makes the blood of Jesus and

his righteousness precious, and their felt and galling corruptions prepare them for receiving gladly the healing balm of the Great Physician.

(4.) But the self-righteousness of the second class stupefies their conscience and leads them to put the Savior far away.

DISCUSSION.

As we have said, the "two sons" represent the chief priests, scribes, elders and Pharisees in general on the one hand, and the publicans and open sinners on the other. And the assertion is, that publicans and harlots should be saved rather than these formal religionists. An examination of the New Testament shows that this was actually the case. Matthew ix. 9; xx. 16. Luke vii. 37–50; xix. 9. Romans v. 20, 21; ix. 30–33. 1 Timothy i. 13–16. The last of these texts shows that the fact asserted in our parable was not peculiar to the nation of the Jews, but is common among the Gentiles also. Zephaniah iii. 12. 1 Corinthians i. 26–31. John vii. 48. Matthew xi. 25. James ii. 5. Revelation ii. 9.

These declarations of Holy Writ are verified in the history of the Church in every age. The pagan philosophy of Greece and of Rome formed in the days of primitive Christianity a stronger barrier against the progress of the gospel than all the idolatrous customs and prejudices of the common people. The primitive converts were chiefly, almost entirely, from the lower and middle classes of society. The Christian Church was reproached as being

the shelter and the home for the wickedest and worst of mankind. And thus it has ever been. The great, the rich, the learned (as the world views learning), the powerful, as a general thing, like Dives, have received their good things in this life,* whilst the peace loving spirit of Christianity, fleeing from the glitter and noise of the world, has sought a home in the changed and tranquilized hearts of the plebeian population. So it was in the middle ages. Even among the great men of the Church you will find but little on which the Christian's eye can rest with satisfaction. But in the shades of obscurity, and in the remote and almost inaccessible valleys of the Alps, the Christian graces and virtues bloomed and flourished. So it was also in the Reformation. Kings, popes, priests, politicians, great men in general (as the world views greatness), were its opponents and persecutors. But the middle and lower classes of society, the unlearned, the obscure and the humble hailed it and the gospel, which was its moving force, with eagerness and joy. So it is now. Look at Germany, England, New England. Their statesmen, philosophers, and, alas! many of their divines, reject the simple faith of the gospel, and put their trust in rationalistic and neological theories, or in schemes of justification and salvation by human morality and merit.

But why is this? Can not God convict and save such persons as well as others? And if so, why does he not? They are within the reach of converting grace, as is evinced by the fact, that although

* Luke xvi. 25.

the overwhelming majority of such persons in apostolic times lived unsanctified and died unblest, yet some of them were converted and saved.

1. Among the primitive Christians there were some persons of wealth. 1 Timothy ii. 9. 1 Peter iii. 3.

2. There were among them also men of learning. 1 Timothy vi. 20. Colossians ii. 8.

3. Some of them were persons of rank. 1 Corinthians i. 26. The declaration that not *many* noble were called, implies that a few of such persons were called, among whom was Dionysius. Acts xvii. 34.

Why the publicans and harlots, open and avowed and outrageous sinners, were received into the kingdom of God rather than the reverend elders, the learned and studious lawyers, and the grave and orderly Pharisees; and why the rich and the noble and the learned and the mere moralist are often passed by, while those worse and wickeder and more ignorant and more degraded are taken, is an inquiry at once interesting and instructive. We remark, as follows:

1. There are certain states of mind more favorable to the reception of the gospel than others. The salvation it offers is salvation to the lost, the miserable, the guilty, the helpless; and none but those who feel themselves to be so will embrace it. Those who are rich and fare sumptuously every day—who are driven by the cares of this world and are immersed in its pleasures—have no inclination

or desire for the gospel, which is a gospel for the poor and miserable.

Those who are learned can not consent to receive instruction as little children from a divine teacher, or put themselves on a level with the ignorant. Their minds are engrossed by other studies. Having strong minds, and being conscious and vain of their strength, they neglect prayer for the influence of the Spirit.

Those who are noble disdain to be placed on a level with the poor and the mean in the concernment of salvation. Accustomed to flattery, they overestimate themselves. Relying on their power and many resources, they do not feel helpless and poor and miserable, and hence do not realize the need of salvation.

The man of morality and civility, vain of his accomplishments, turns away with bitterness and disdain from the humbling doctrines of the gospel. This was the condition of the Pharisees and of the elders. Outwardly strict observers of the law, far removed from open, gross immorality, they never dreamed that they needed an atonement, and so were not likely to come to Christ. Indeed as long as they retained their proud, self-righteous spirit, they were not open to the reception of the gospel. How could they trust in Christ as their Savior, who did not believe themselves lost? How could they apply to the Great Physician for aid, who did not believe themselves sick? How could they desire and receive the true riches, who did not believe themselves poor and miserable and naked, but

esteemed themselves rich and increased in goods and in need of nothing? Will that man thank you for the offer of a shelter who is not exposed? or for food, who is full? or for medicine, who is well?

The priests, elders, lawyers, scribes and Pharisees, from their self-sufficient and self-righteous spirit were not open to the influences of the gospel; and there are many in our own day precisely in the same condition. Thus the *rich*, engrossed with the cares and pleasures of wealth, have no time nor heart to seek salvation. The *student* is so much taken up with the investigations of science that his mind is entirely abstracted from the study of the great truths revealed in the Scriptures — so much employed in learning what is without him, that he has no time left for becoming acquainted with himself—so absorbed in tracing second causes, that he entirely forgets the great First Cause of all. Perhaps to the spiritually-minded man, there is not out of the Bible a more cogent proof of the depravity of the human mind than is to be found in the fact that men are universally prone to forget God and wander from him in their reasoning and conclusions.

Here I would take occasion to protest and earnestly remonstrate against the course of education pursued in our universities, our law and medical colleges, our seminaries and district schools. It tends to the destruction of all religion and to the propagation of infidelity in its stead, and hence it is execrated of God and of all good and thoughtful men. This is one of the evils that finds its excuse in the

divided state of the Church, and it tends to increase the evil in which it claims to originate. But as the student and the man of wealth of our day are in much the same condition with those to whom our parable was originally addressed, so also are the politician and statesman.

But, above all, the *ignorant* moralist is not likely to enter the kingdom of heaven. Like the Pharisee of our text, he is ignorant of the reality and totality of man's natural corruption—ignorant of the exceeding breadth and spirituality of God's law—ignorant of the character of God as a sin-hating and sin-avenging God, and therefore the good news of the gospel is to him a sealed book and a dead letter. Man is morally diseased, guilty and ruined. The gospel offers a remedy—offers healing, cleansing, deliverance, restoration to righteousness and purity, and to the blessed enjoyment of God's favor. But to the ignorant moralist the offer is useless. He will neither understand, believe in, nor receive it.

Many men in our country suppose that if they only believe that Christ has come and died and arisen and ascended, and then live as well as they can, that all will be well with them. Alas, what infatuation and madness! What a desperate delusion of the carnal mind! Is man not fallen? Is he not corrupt? Is he not estranged from God? Is he not a sinner and under the wrath and curse of God? Is it not necessary that his sins be forgiven, and that he is freed from the fiery and dreadful curse? Is there no need for the new birth, and for

the sanctification of the soul? Poor, mad, mole-blind mortals! who know not, and will not learn, the way of life, but take up with a few notions picked up by chance, and desperately risk all and lose all in an unsound bottom. Oh when will men cease to be the victims of their own folly! Now these men have no accessible side on which Christianity can approach them. They are in their own estimation the whole who have no need of the Great Physician, and to offer him to them is like casting pearls before swine.

The case is altogether different with the gross, but the convinced and humbled sinner. Such a one feels the need of pardon—of a justifying righteousness—of effectual calling, and inward illumination—of God's sanctifying, strengthening, preserving and upholding grace. He feels his utter unworthiness and his need of salvation, and thus is prepared to accept the offers and promises of the gospel. This principle goes far to account for the fact that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before the grave, sober, formal, solemn, but self-righteous and self-sufficient Pharisees.

But if it is replied, that the efficacious and invincible grace of God could change these men—could bring them to see how vile, sinful and miserable they are—how much they need the salvation of the gospel and how greatly mistaken they are in trusting to anything else; and that the Spirit, who bloweth where he listeth, and the Almighty God, who doeth his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth, could touch and change the

hearts of even these men of pride and an ignorant, rotten self-dependence, and bring them as earnest, humble beggars to the footstool of sovereign mercy—and if it therefore be inquired why a high and uncontrolled God sometimes makes the greatest and grossest of sinners the object of his almighty and saving influences, whilst he passes by the accomplished and self-complaisant moralist, it is sufficient to answer that so it seemed good in his sight.

But I think that in the inspired pages we may also discover the revelation of another reason, viz: that thus all will be compelled to say that salvation is wholly of grace. Romans iii. 23–27; v. 20, 21.

It would seem that, as a general thing, he selects the middle and lower classes of society rather than the learned, the accomplished and the proud; and, that he sometimes selects the publican and the harlot to be the objects and the subjects of his saving power—just for the same reason that he chose the twelve apostles from the middle and lower classes rather than from among kings, princes and philosophers, viz: that all men may be compelled to acknowledge that the salvation of the believer from first to last is from God only, and that they may be enabled from the depths of a broken and melted heart to say and sing, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

### CONCLUSION.

1. Let our parable be a warning to those who once were, or seemed to be, in a fair way to become

respectable and useful Christians, but who, like spring blossoms, now lie withered beneath the tree, and are trodden under foot.

2. Let this parable be a warning to the backslidden and backsliding churches of Protestantism, and let them repent of their errors, lukewarmness, and schisms.

3. Let this parable be a warning to those Protestant nations that once promised well, but who have now cast off or are casting off allegiance to Prince Messiah. Especially let it be a warning to our own nation.

4. Let those who have hitherto been great sinners take encouragement to repent and return to God.

5. Let God's children be encouraged to be busy with and for the guilty.

## SERMON XII.

# The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen.

MATTHEW XXI. 33–44.

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This parable foreshadows the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles. In doing this, it gives us an interesting and impressive view of the divine character and government, a very alarming picture of the depravity of the human heart, and a most solemn warning against obduracy and impenitence. To these things we invite your attention to-day.

I. *The exposition of the parable.*

1. "A certain man planted a vineyard." (Thirty-third verse.) We can be at no loss for the meaning of this figure, which so plainly points out the Church of the Jewish times. To speak of God's Church under the image of a vine, of vine-branches or of a vineyard, is a frequent and a favorite style of the Sacred Oracles. Isaiah v. 1–7. Psalm lxxx. 8–16. Jeremiah ii. 21.

And the image is a fit one. The unwearied pains

necessary in cultivating the vine, fitly emblemizes the divine care in the culture of the Church. The abundance and deliciousness of the fruit, with its rich and generous juices, excellently shadows forth the fruits of piety, while the barren vine, the most useless of all the wood of the forest, not fit to make even a pin whereon to hang a garment, is a sad shadow of a barren church or a barren soul.

2. But as to the vineyard which God had planted on a very fruitful hill, he "hedged it round about." Verse 35. By his laws and institutions, he erected "a middle wall of partition"* between Jews and Gentiles, whereby the people dwelt alone and were not reckoned among the nations, and so were preserved from the corrupting influence of the surrounding world, during the immature state of that period.† "Judea by its geographical position was hedged round—by the bounty of nature on every side circumscribed and defended—guarded on the east by the river Jordan and the two lakes, on the south by the desert and the mountainous country of Idumea, on the west by the sea, and by Anti-Libanus on the north."‡ The people dwelt alone in the midst of the earth, and nature itself rose up to defend them. So did nature's God. His power, wisdom, goodness and grace were "a wall of fire round about them, and a glory in their midst." As the mountains were round about Jerusalem, so the Lord was round about his people from day to day. Yea, in that day they sang this song: "A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it

* Ephesians ii. 14. † Numbers xxiii. 9. ‡ Trench.

every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."*

3. "He also digged a winepress." As the winepress causes the juices of the purple and gushing clusters to flow forth, so God made a winepress for his Church; *i. e.*, he established those ordinances and institutions, whereby the fruits of piety were made to abound to his glory. Nehemiah ix. 3.

4. "He built a tower." Verse 33. I am not prepared to affirm this to be added merely for ornament or to complete the imagery, so long as a spiritual meaning seems to be so evidently indicated. For as a tower furnished a commanding point of observation and oversight, so God established in his ancient vineyard civil and religious government, with all the blessings which (when well administered) follows in its train. He gave his people, officers and leaders written laws and republican institutions, himself ever remaining at the head of all. Thus the vineyard was finished and furnished.

5. "He let it out to husbandmen." By the husbandmen here some understand the Jewish teachers and rulers. But I would understand rather the whole house of Israel. To the entire nation was committed the keeping of the oracles of God. To them all pertained the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises. To the entire Jewish Church was committed a great and solemn trust, and for the faithful discharge of the high duties

* Zechariah ii. 5. Psalm cxxv. 2. Isaiah xxvii. 2, 3.

which that trust imposed were the whole Jewish corporation held responsible.

6. "And went into a far country." By this we are not to understand any removal or change of place. Much less are we to understand that God, the householder, is not at all times present everywhere—for the Omnipresent Jehovah fills heaven and earth—but the language is used in accommodation to human weakness. God is said to have taken his journey afar, either because after he had delivered his people from Egypt and planted them in Palestine, he was not visibly and sensibly present within subsequent periods, or, because the vinedressers imagined that God did not notice or regard their conduct. Ezekiel viii. 12; ix. 9. Luke xii. 45.

7. "And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it." Privilege implies responsibility. Trust implies our obligation. Our talents, learning, skill and wealth are so many trusts committed to us of God, for the right use of which we are to be accountable to him. At the proper season God will require us to give an account of our stewardship, and of every one of us he will require fruit proportioned to the mercies bestowed.

8. "And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise." Verses 35 and 36. The prophets and extraordinary messengers, whom God raised up and sent to call the people to repentance and stimulate them to reformation and

holiness, are here spoken of. He sent his prophets, rising early and sending them, saying: "Oh do not this abominable thing that I hate." But they heeded not. "They beat one, and killed another, and stoned another." The Scriptures give ample statement of facts in corroboration of the charge here brought. 1 Kings xix. 10. 2 Kings vi. 31. 2 Chronicles xxiv. 19. Jeremiah xxxvii. 15. Acts vii. 52. And if we may believe the traditions of the Jews themselves, Isaiah was sawn asunder, Jeremiah was stoned to death by the exiles in Egypt, and Amos was beaten to death with a club. At a later period John the Baptist fared no better. During a long period the servants of God experienced continual persecution and sorrow. "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented."* The entire discourse of Stephen is but a brief historic compend, in demonstration of the charge brought in our text.†

9. But the mercy of God is above all his works. The goodness of God is infinite. "But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son." Verse 37. Mark says: "Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved, he sent him also last unto them." (Chapter xii. 6.) Behold, my brethren, the patience of God! How great is his goodness! how great is his bounty! Instead of lifting up his awful voice and arousing his terrible power, he studies to devise ways and means to

* Hebrews xi. 37. † Acts vii.

spare and reclaim the rebels. He sends his "one Son," saying, "They will reverence my Son."

But here, again, we meet with language spoken after the manner of men. We are not to understand that God did not foresee their rejection and crucifixion of Emmanuel. But he uses the language of the parable in speaking as men do; as much as to say: "Surely this patience and goodness will melt them and win them; surely they are not so lost to all sense of justice and gratitude and loyalty as to treat him as they treated the servants; since they are men and not devils, surely they will reverence my Son."

10. But behold the enormous height of wickedness, to which sin carries the obdurate and impenitent heart. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."* As soon as the husbandmen saw the son they determined to destroy him. Their language was: "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." Verse 38. We are not to suppose that the Jewish nobles and rulers ever dared to use this language in each other's ears, or to avow such sentiments, when consulting together to take the Messiah's life. But it is the thoughts of the heart, rather than the words of the tongue, which constitute language in the ears of God. If you wish to see how and when the parable found its fulfillment, turn to the eleventh chapter of John, 47–50. No sooner had Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead

* Ecclesiastes viii. 11.

—a miracle which caused many to believe on him—than the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said: "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." Behold the counsel of them who said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." Lest they should lose their national independence and their religious pre-eminence, they would kill him whom they confessed to have done many miracles. Can human wickedness mount higher?

11. But there is a point beyond which divine mercy will not go, and the husbandmen had now reached that point. Henceforth God's clemency will restrain itself, and he will visit their sins upon them. "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons;" *i. e.*, he will utterly subvert the Jewish nation; he will bring the Roman armies upon them; he will scatter them to the four winds of heaven; he will take from them the kingdom and give it to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, even to the Gentiles.

You will observe, my friends, that the Savior, being about to declare that the Jews should soon

cease to be the favorites of heaven, and were about to be signally destroyed of God, prefaces this declaration with a statement of the crimes and sins on account of which the divine vengeance was about to overtake them. Here, as in the parable which Nathan employed in dealing with David, you see not only the beauty, but the excellency of parabolical teaching. Our Savior skillfully lays before the Jews their own guilt, as set forth in this parable, and elicits from their own mouths the just sentence of their own condemnation, before they perceive upon whom the denunciation was about to fall. "He will miserably destroy those wicked men," they truthfully, but unconsciously declared. He then went on to show that great as was the guilt of the Jewish people, that had been accumulating for centuries, and great as was the wrath of God on account of it, they were about to widen and deepen that guilt and wrath, by the rejection and crucifixion of the Son of the Most High. He further taught that, however great was their crime in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory, still the crowning act of the crime, that which would cap the climax of their wickedness, would be their continued hatred of and opposition to him afterward. For even after their crucifixion of him, mercy would have been bestowed upon them, if they had repented and believed the gospel. The risen Savior commanded the disciples in preaching the gospel to begin at Jerusalem.* Great as was the accumulated guilt of past times, and greatly augmented as this had

* Luke xxiv. 47.

been by their treatment of the Messiah, still they had not utterly passed beyond the reach of mercy. But by their rejection of the salvation proclaimed, in the name of the risen Jesus, by his accredited embassadors, the cup of their iniquity, already full, was made to run over. By this last, crowning act of their rebellion, they passed beyond the reach of the hand of mercy, and there remained no more place for repentance. A destruction sudden, inevitable and irreversible came down from God upon them.

There is here, my friends, the exemplification of a lesson which we are greatly anxious that you should learn and lay to heart. It is this, that there is a point in the path of each one of you beyond which, if you go, you will be beyond the reach of mercy. Great and aggravated as are the sins of men before they reach that point, these sins may be washed out by the blood and Spirit of Christ; but when once they pass beyond it, there is no hope of conversion and remission. All along the path of life does the Spirit, in his common operations, strive with the sinner, on up to that point of it beyond which he will strive no more, and all along does the incorrigible sinner resist and grieve and quench the Spirit, thereby rendering his efforts and his intimations feebler and still more feeble, until finally they wane and wither into utter and everlasting extinction, and the obstinate sinner is given up and given over as a doomed and incorrigible outcast. If you once pass that point, beyond which the Holy Spirit will neither follow nor strive, your salvation will be as impossible and as hopeless as that of those who with

a daring hand have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost.

I can not be mistaken, my friends. On this point the Holy Oracles speak a language not to be misunderstood. Genesis vi. 3. Psalm lxxxi. 11, 12. Psalm xcv. 7–11. Luke xiii. 24–28. Revelation xxii. 11. These, and other passages, teach that there is a point in the track of obstinacy, a day somewhere in the rebellious sinner's lifetime, beyond which, if he resists the appliances and instrumentalities brought to bear upon him in the gospel, the Spirit will cease to strive and the conscience to chide, and he will sink into coldness and indifference, from which he will not be aroused until death, with iron mace, knocks heavily at his door.

But this is not the only consideration that should alarm the unconverted. There is another which lies back of it. This fearful condition is not reached at once, but by degrees. And the longer any one delays, the likelihood increases that he will become a reprobate. It is increased not only because time is passing, and he is drawing nearer and nearer the fatal limit, but also because his heart is hardening, and is hardening just as rapidly as time is passing. It is not an uncommon sight to see one, who, at ten years of age could not repose at night without pouring out his young heart in prayer, attain to such obduracy in sin, when he reaches the years of majority, that neither prayer, nor song, nor Sabbath, nor sanctuary, are regarded by him. This gradual process of hardening is going on in heart

and conscience of every one who is resisting the gospel and the Spirit of God.

Now, my friends, what a lesson is here taught in regard to the necessity of present repentance and reformation! How clearly does it demonstrate the folly of procrastination! Each day as it passes increases the probabilities of your eternal perdition, if you are not already saved through faith and repentance. The work of seeking salvation is to you so difficult and unpleasant that you can not find in your heart to commence it, and hence you procrastinate. But when will it be less difficult or less unpleasant? Never, never; but the longer the worse. Sinful habits are growing stronger, and are deepening their hold. The gangrene is spreading. The affections are becoming still more earthly, malignant passions still more violent, the conscience still more torpid, and, to crown all, the Holy Spirit is withdrawing himself. I ask you, when under these circumstances will you repent, if you do not repent now? If you have not the heart to commence the work now, when will you have it? Will it be when the sinful habits you are now forming shall have grown to maturity, and become a part, so to speak, of your very nature? Will you more easily resolve to love God after your affections have become thorougly estranged from him? Will you be persuaded to forsake your sins when conscience has ceased to sound the trumpet of alarm, and the Holy Spirit, vexed and grieved, has turned to be your enemy and fights against you? Oh, desperate infatuation of human folly! Miserable self-delud-

ing, self-destroying course! Suppose you are a prisoner closely confined, and in circumstances of great distress, fed upon bread and water, and with the prospect before you that, in case your confinement continue, your misery will be continually and unspeakably augmented; suppose, further, that the water you drink comes from a vessel tightly closed so that you may not know how much it contains and that no more may be put into it; and suppose that you are assured, on good authority, that the means and opportunity of deliverance shall be afforded you at any moment you desire, on up until the time when all the water shall be exhausted from the vessel—how miserable your condition, if you do not embrace the offer of deliverance! When once you have exhausted the vessel, your prospects and your hopes are over. As you have already drawn much from it, and you know not the quantity it contained at first, perhaps the very next draught may exhaust the supply and close the doors of your prison upon you forever. Need I, my hearers, apply the comparison, or point out the truth which the supposition illustrates? Yield to the Spirit whilst he draws you. Repent whilst you may. Every act of rebellion grieves and quenches the Spirit's operations within you; every Sabbath idled away, every sermon slighted, every unhallowed imagination cherished, every providence unheeded, are so many provocatives to the withdrawal of his influence and his final departure from you. Thus saith the Lord: "Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they

have trangressed against me . . . yea, woe also to them when I depart from them."*

My hearers, NOW, *now*, is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. Who knows but that one more act of rebellion will consummate your guilt? Who knows, if you now slight the Spirit's warning and winning voice, whether you shall ever hear it again? You can not return from this house as you came. Who can certify you that this day's resistance will not provoke the God of glory to give you over into the hands of the god of this world to blind your minds and harden your hearts? Then will your case be hopeless indeed.

* Hosea vii. 13; ix. 12.

## SERMON XIII.

# The Parable of the Royal Marriage Feast.

MATTHEW XXII. 2.

(*First Sermon.*)

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The idea of the word "marriage" is marriage feast. The word rendered "marriage" is repeatedly used in this sense in the Bible, and this is its force here. The feast, here, signifies the blessings of salvation, procured by the atonement of Christ, and offered in the everlasting gospel to the acceptance of the children of men.

The blessings of salvation are shadowed forth, under the image of a feast, to express their sweetness—their nourishing and delicious character. The children of men, giving ear to Satan and their corrupt hearts, feel as if there was no joy, no happiness, no comfort, in earnest and consecrated and experimental Christianity. As the children of Israel loathed the manna in the wilderness, so sinners disrelish spiritual blessings and joys. They

look on the Christian course as gloomy, distressed and painful, and they promise themselves far more comfort in a life according to the course of this world. Now, to arrest and interest their attention, as well as to express the true nature of the thing, God, the God who can not lie and can not exaggerate or deceive, has, in his word, shadowed forth the blessings of redemption, under the similitude of a feast, a marriage feast, a royal marriage feast, the wedding banquet of a king's son, surpassing all other feasts, transcending in royal and gorgeous richness, and in delicious sweetness, all other feasts in the world.

Let us consider the feast itself, the eating of it, and the result to him that eateth it.

I. Let us consider the feast itself. To meditate on it with profit, you must banish carnal ideas of it from your minds. You must direct your thoughts to something noble and spiritual. You must call to mind the "bread of life," which came down from heaven to give life to the world. It is the bread typified by the manna, that corn of heaven, that angels' food, by which the Israelites were nourished in their journey through the desert. It is the bread, of which, if a man eat, he shall never die. The feast is here plainly not material food for the body, but spiritual food for the soul. It is not that sacramental food, which you are to receive this day, but it is that invisible and impalpable soul food, which the sacrament shadows forth and seals to the humble, believing recipient. It is not the bread of miracles, given to the children of Israel, to nourish

and confirm their weak and wavering faith, in that infant state of the Church.

Thousands are not to be fed here from the loaves and the fishes wherewith the compassionate Savior nourished the famishing multitudes who waited on his ministry. Nor yet in inviting you to this feast, do we offer that bread of pleasantness, eaten in secret, whereafter the flesh of carnal men lusts, and wherewith the world, with perfidious and deceitful tongue, promises to regale it.

But it is the "bread of life" we offer you, a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined; a feast of the soul, a wine to make the heart glad, an oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen you.

1. Not only is this feast a spiritual feast. It is divine. Its great Author is divine. The King is a great King, even a heavenly. He is the King eternal, immortal, and invisible. He is the everlasting God, who created the earth and strewed the heavens with stars; who laid the beams of his chambers in the waters, and stretched out the heavens as a curtain; who formed the light and created the darkness; who maketh the good and createth the evil; who feeds the raven and clothes the lily; who feeds the young ravens when they cry, and gives the young and roaring lion his food. It is a feast of his providing, and it is a feast worthy of its Author. For the *material* of this feast is divine and heavenly also. If the Author is divine, the guests are heavenly. Angels are there, not as guests, but as companions,

as ministers, and the food itself is such as only the precious life of the God-man, Mediator, could purchase. The feast is the worthy fruit of his incarnation and mighty travail, of his toil and his tears and dying groans.

It is a feast of pardon, of full, free, unconditional pardon, to all who will accept it; of pardon for all their sins, no matter how many, how great, or how greatly aggravated; of every man who truly desires to flee from the wrath to come. It is a feast of acceptance into the family and fellowship of God; a feast in which it is given you to taste the ineffable sweetness of divine love, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost! It is a feast of sanctifying grace; of grace to renovate, to purify, beautify, ennoble, and fit for heaven. It is a feast, in a word, in which the soul feeds upon Jesus Christ, and so is filled with the fullness of him, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; partakes of his life, whereby you live forever; of his strength, whereby you are enabled to overcome all and triumph over all; of his wisdom to guide and direct in all possible emergencies; of his Spirit, whereby you are transformed into his image, and come to be like him; of his blood, whereby you are purged from all sin; of his righteousness, wherein, as with a robe of spotless, stainless purity, you shall stand with acceptance before the throne of God.

2. Therefore, I remark, it is a nutrimental feast. The Savior, all whose words are truth, assures us, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." If any man eat of the bread of earth, he shall hun-

ger again; and if he eat only of that bread, he shall die and perish forever. But he who eateth of *this* bread shall never hunger. He shall never die. He shall be nourished into life eternal. Marvelous feast is this! And, oh, why will any of you reject it? You are dying, perishing men, but this food will save you. Your souls are pining and famishing, but this food, if you will but eat it, will be both diet and medicine to you, and you shall live, though you were dead. Believest thou this, and wilt thou still reject it? Damaging and infatuated folly! Who hath ever heard or could have been convinced that any dying man could have been guilty of it? Were some poor wretch pinioned down, by a painful disease, to a bed of languishing, and doomed to sorrowful days and wearisome nights, informed of a diet, costly, but free to him, a diet at once medicinal and nutrimental, a diet, which alone would free his body from all pain, all disease, all weakness, and restore him to perfect health and strength—oh how gladly would he search for it until he found it, and how willingly and how greedily would he feed upon it until he had recovered! Were some poor Hindu, as he sighs on the banks of the Ganges, and awaits the angel of death to put a period to his earthly career, to be informed of an herb, which, if he would eat it, would restore his worn and wasted frame to youth and health and strength and beauty, and make his regained strength to wear and his newly found beauty to bloom immortally, how eagerly, how restlessly, would he seek until he found it, and, returning to his home and surprised and transported

friends, inform them of his wondrous recovery, and of the marvelous means by which he became immortal! Now that herb is the gospel feast! Eating it, the soul becomes immortal, and it is this, and this alone, that can save the sinner from death and hell! It alone can give the dying sinner life, and restore the famishing soul to strength, and make it live forever! Eating it, the soul becomes strong and deathless, and is enabled to carry on the contest with the world, the flesh, and the devil; and, notwithstanding the unequal odds, to come out of the strife "a conqueror, and more than conqueror, through Him that loved us."

3. And it will have this effect, not only in one case, but in every case. For it is a feast suited to all. To every son of Adam born it is adapted, and for him it will be efficient, if he will but receive it. No soul is beyond its efficacy, if it be but tried. Jesus Christ is a mighty Savior, able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him. No one has ever eaten of this food, and perished of hunger. It is a feast adapted to men of every age, country, character, rank, and condition. It will revive and strengthen the fainting Arab amid his scorching sands, and nourish, as with marrow and fatness, the shivering Greenlander in his cave of snow and storm. It adds to youth a fresher beauty; to manhood a stronger nerve, and by purifying the sluggish veins of age, causes them to stream more warmly and sweetly to the heart. It lends to hope a brighter pinion; to intellect a clearer vision, and to the soul a sure anchor amid the storms of time.

Above all, its sweet efficacy and priceless value are found in the hour of trial and sorrow. When disaster follows disaster, until poverty lays the griping hand of want upon you; when sickness and disease sting you with their poison-dripping fangs, until the head swims, the knees tremble, and the heart faints; when the world deserts you; and your best friends, like those of Job, become your worst tormentors; though your bosom's bride, the dear object of the heart's idolatry, like the fair and false Delilah, should desert you, should mock at your heart's desolation; yet the soul, sustained and strengthened by this heavenly food, reveling on this celestial banquet, filled with marrow and fatness, as it falls from the hand of God, is able to endure all, to encounter all, to triumph over all. And as it breaks through every wall and overleaps every barrier; as it, with more than Samson's strength, puts troops of enemies to flight and discomfits them, and goes on from victory to victory, it can boldly say, "If God be for me, who can be against me?" "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, shall ever be able to separate me from the love of God, which is Christ Jesus our Lord."*

4. But not only is this a spiritual and nutrimental feast, suited to all, but all need it, and must perish without it. There is no other name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Christ. There is but one way of access for guilty

* Romans viii. 38, 39.

man to the throne of a holy God, and that is through the rent vail of the Redeemer's flesh. There is but one expiation for sin, and that is by the offering of Jesus Christ once for all. There is but one way of obtaining that moral renovation and purity which fits for the presence of God and the joys of the beatific vision, and that is by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven—sent down at the intercession of Jesus Christ. There is but One who can guide us safely through the devious paths of time, supply our wants on our journey, protect us from danger, comfort us in sorrow, strengthen us in duty, and bring us safely to the land of rest, and that One is the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Oh, then, why not come to his feast? Why not freely embrace Jesus Christ, as he is freely offered to you in the gospel of grace?

Yea, strange as it may sound in the ears of many, *all* need this feast, and must perish without it. Eternal famine will prey upon you and consume you, else. Pause, O guilty, condemned and lost one, and ask: "What is my condition if I have no interest in the great salvation, no interest in pardoning mercy and in justifying righteousness and sanctifying grace? No interest in the love of God, or the joys of heaven? What, then, are my present joys, what my future hopes, and what my final destiny? O men of earth, under the awful curse of God! bread perhaps you have, and bread in abundance; but it is not that living bread. It is that bread upon which you may feed, but starve and die. To depend only upon it is like feeding the soul on

husks, or on the dry east wind. There are many who have this bread, and have it in abundance—many who clothe themselves in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day; who wash their steps with butter, and whose rocks pour out rivers of oil; who send forth their little ones as a flock; whose children dance; who spend their days in wealth, taking up the timbrel and harp, and rejoicing at the sound of the organ.* Wealth and luxury and gorgeous splendor they have in abundance. Every clime and country is laid under contribution to supply the rich treasure-seeker with comforts and luxuries. From where the Cape of Good Hope braves the rugged fury of the ceaseless tempest and the fierce lashings of the foam-whitened wave, to where the storm-tossed Arctic thunders the deep bass in nature's anthem to nature's God—all, all are taxed and made to minister to the gorgeous splendor of his joy-lit halls, and to the delicious luxury of his smoking board and flowing bowl. And from week to week the feast goes on, and the sweet music and the voice of joyous revelry break in upon the still ear of sleeping midnight, and starts her drowsy pulse to a quicker pace. And surely these favorites of fortune, these sons of elegance and genius, of wealth and splendor, have bread enough and to spare. Surely they are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. Surely now, that they are full, they can afford to forget God, and arrogantly treat the preachers and the preaching of the gospel, and neglect the feast. But look!

* Job xxi. 11–13.

yonder on that lovely face which blushes at its own queenly beauty; and yonder, on that broad and manly brow, I see the worm of want and famine gnawing noiselessly and secretly. Full well it revels. It grows and fattens on those earth-fed frames. And hark! the vail of the future is raised, and from yon gorgeous, festal chambers of wealth and taste and splendor, I hear a starving cry for *food!* Full well the worm has done his work. Those forms of beauty and strength, on the very verge of the grave, are pining, aye, perishing, for food. In the midst of wealth and friends and family; in the midst of music and revelry, by the very side of the smoking board and flowing bowl, they are starving to death; and the last sound that comes gurgling forth in their gasping effort for breath is a heart-rending wail for food, the food by which souls live. And another sound comes; it comes looming from beyond the bounds of time; it comes wailing up with the groans and howlings of Tophet below! It is a sound of mingled curses and cries for bread! bread!

Away with the treacherous promises of earth! Away with the fallacious vanities of time! Away with the gilded apples of Sodom! with the beautiful mirage of the desert! What profit in wealth and splendor and pleasure, which deceive to destroy!

O my God, give me to eat the food of life eternal! Give me those riches which shall not make to themselves wings and fly away and vanish in my hour of need—that honor and glory and splendor which are

incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, but are reserved in heaven forever.

And now, dear immortal friends and neighbors, will you longer refuse to come to this feast of salvation? Will you persist in saying that you are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing, when you know that you are poor and miserable and blind and naked? Oh, why will you delay? Come to this feast. Come to the Savior whom I offer you, for you do need to be saved. While life lasts, while reason retains her seat in your brain, while God is still on mercy-treating terms, and still offering to be gracious; ere the day of your merciful visitation passes forever; ere your heart is clean hardened and your consciences clean seared and the Holy Spirit clean gone, embrace the offers of everlasting life. Ere your riches make to themselves wings and fly away; ere your gold and silver are cankered and garments eaten by the moth; ere the God of heaven take from you the whole stay of water and the whole staff of bread; and while yet the voice of mercy calls, come, come to the feast. You need it, and God invites you! Yea, come, come and eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved, of the bread and the water which nourish into life eternal. Come, for you are welcome, and if you eat this food, you shall live forever.

II. And now, a word as to the coming and the eating. You come and you eat by faith, and by faith alone. It is faith in Christ Jesus which unites you to him, and makes you partaker of his fullness.

You become the sons of God by faith in him. It is by faith in Christ that you obtain the pardon of your sins and an inheritance among those that are sanctified. Faith is the turning point of your salvation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. He that believeth hath life, and he that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. Faith in Christ infallibly secures all covenant blessings to him that believeth. But you ask, What is this faith? What is it to believe in Jesus Christ to the saving of the soul? Only this: to believe in the gospel as a message from heaven, and in your soul cordially to embrace it. It is to believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior of sinners, able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, and truly consent to take him for their Savior, and to rely only on him for salvation. This is to come to the feast. This is to eat it. This is to secure salvation. He offers to save you, and he promises that if you will accede to the offer he will save you. No matter how wicked has been your life, nor how disordered your heart, if you really wish salvation, and will take him for a Savior, he will save you. You are not able to help yourself, but he declares, if you will only trust him, he will help you. As a Prophet, he will teach you the way of salvation, and fill your mind with heavenly light. As an atoning High Priest, he offers himself a victim on the altar of divine justice in your stead, and with his own blood will expiate your sins. As an interceding High Priest, he will be your advocate in

heaven, obtain acceptance for your person, and your services before God, and by his all-prevailing prayers obtain all the blessings of salvation for you, from his Father and your Father, his God and your God. As a great King he will rule in you and reign over you; he will subdue your stubborn and rebellious heart, entirely to his love and service, and protect and deliver you from all dangers, enemies and sins, and present you faultless at last in the presence of his Father. All this he offers and promises to do. And now faith is simply to take him at his word; to believe he is able and willing to do it, and rest your everlasting all in confidence upon him.

And, oh, what confidence is his word fitted to inspire! Heaven and earth may pass away, and shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away, until all be fulfilled.

Oh, then, poor, ignorant, guilty, polluted, condemned, lost men and women, commit your souls to Christ, that you may be saved. Do so, confidently relying upon his word. Give doubts and fears to the winds. Know that he is able and faithful who hath promised. Yea, trust in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. And know, for your consolation, that if you trust in him, you shall never be ashamed of your confidence; know that whoso trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.

This, then, is the whole mystery of faith. It is simply believing what the Bible says of Christ and trusting in him to perform it. It is merely a casting

of all your burdens upon him, that he may sustain you. The awakened soul realizes that it is in a famishing and perishing condition. But by faith it sees Christ to be the bread of life, and suddenly it rejoices as one that finds a great, strong spoil; and it comes and eats and lives.

And it lives over again the history of the Israelites, in their deliverance from the land of Egypt and their journey to the promised land. Like them, it is in a state of bondage, under the guilt and power of sin, and it can do nothing. But when it cries out to God, under a felt sense of its misery, he hears and pities and frees it, and brings it out of the spiritual Egypt, through the Red Sea of regeneration, into a state of grace and liberty. But though renewed and restored to divine favor, and put under divine guidance, its course to the Canaan of rest lies through a wilderness; a great howling wilderness; a wilderness of sin; a great, moral Sahara; where no flower blooms and no verdure quickens, except by a divine and supernatural impulse. He is delivered from a state of nature, and brought into the pale of the kingdom of grace, but his way to heaven lies through a wicked world of sins and snares and sorrows. Israel's journey was beautifully typical of this. Their way to Canaan lay through a desert, a terrible, howling wilderness. And save where here and there, some green oasis, like an islet in the sea, relieved the weary eye, all was a terrible and gloomy and barren waste—far as the eye could reach, not a house, or a tree, or a shrub, or a blade of grass to be seen; save, where

now and then, a wild prickly thorn waved in the passing wind, or a tall, shaggy thistle tinged, with a deeper hue, the gloomy, hot and sterile desolation. Around the base of the thunder-gashed Sinai, to the eye of the traveler, the desert looks as if it were still mute with terror at the remembrance of a manifested God; or, rather, as if this were the place where Satan landed first, when fresh from hell, with cindered feet and fire-blasted wings, he came to tempt the primal pair and darken our Eden home. And through this were the Israelites to pass, themselves, their families, their flocks, and herds. But how are they to obtain water and bread? Behold! He smote the rock, and the floods gushed forth and ran in the desert like a stream! He commanded the winds of heaven, and they brought quails as thick as dust, around about their tabernacle and tents. He rained manna upon them; bread from heaven. Man did eat angels' food.*

Behold here a type of the Christian's journey to heaven. He, too, is traveling through a world, blasted by sin and barren of good; a world fitly designated "the desert of sin." He feels the choking of thirst and the gnawing of hunger. He looks around in his nakedness and helplessness; but no water or bread meets his eye; not even a drop or a root, to slake the one or satiate the other. He raises a prayer for bread, and Jesus answers, "My flesh is meat indeed." He cries for water, and Jesus answers, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."† He eats and

* Psalm lxxviii. 15–28. † John vi. 55; iv. 14.

drinks to the full, and feels that he shall live forever. His strength recruited; his courage reinspired; the pillar of cloud to guide him; invisible, but almighty arms around him; all regardless of the scorching sun and burning sands, the weary distance or the manifold obstacles, the joyful pilgrim wends his way onward with unwearied steps to the Canaan above. It matters not to him that the desert is barren, for Jesus is his bread; or that he knows no well or spring for many a weary mile, for he drinks of the Rock that follows him by the way, which Rock is Christ. Tell him of the fiery serpent, whose sting is fatal, and he will smile, as he answers, "There is a brazen serpent too," and on he goes, rejoicing in his confidence and hope. Many an enemy he meets and many a conflict has he; but strengthened by the food on which he feeds, he still comes off conqueror and more than conqueror. His soul treads down strength; his hands are taught to war; and his arms to break bows of steel in pieces; and at the end of his journey he exclaims, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.* "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."†

It is thus that, by faith, the saint feeds on this

* 2 Timothy iv. 7, 8. † 1 Corinthians xv. 55, 57.

feast continually, and obtains from the Redeemer every blessing that he needs.

III. But who is he that is thus at liberty to come to this gospel feast and receive the blessings of salvation? Who is he, who is privileged to come and feed upon this feast of pardoning mercy, of justifying righteousness and sanctifying grace; of light in darkness; strength in weakness; consolation in trouble; aid in duty; deliverance in danger; and all other good things which the soul needs for its temporal, spiritual and eternal welfare? Do you say, "Who?" My answer is, "I invite you all." God invites you all. Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.* And if I am asked, Who is the happy individual who has come to this feast and eaten, and how may he be known? I answer, He is a man who has felt hunger. He is a man who has been made sensible of his fallen and miserable condition. He is a man who has heard the gospel and considered it well; who is sensible that he needs just such a Savior as is therein revealed to him, and offered to his acceptance; and has cordially embraced him and his salvation. He is a man, consequently, who has repented and turned to God; who has renounced the service of the world, the flesh, and Satan; who earnestly longs for and desires salvation above all things. He is, moreover, a humble man; a man who has no confidence in his own righteousness or his own strength; but who counts all his own merit as dung that he may be found in Christ, not having

* Revelation xxii. 17.

his own righteousness, but that of Jesus Christ.* He is a man who lives and labors for heaven; who denies all ungodliness and worldly lusts; who indulges in no known sin; who desires to purge himself from all the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

Is this your character? I trust and hope some here can say, "It is." But I fear that some here can not in truth say so. And now, will you continue longer in a state of ruin? Will you longer refuse this feast? Consider what has been truthfully, scripturally, said of it; that it is a feast spiritual, nutrimental, divine, suited to all, needed by all; and that all must pine in want and perish forever without it. Come, for why will ye die? "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."†

* Philippians iii. 8, 9. † Revelation xxii. 17.

## SERMON XIV.

# The Parable of the Royal Marriage Feast.

MATTHEW XXII. 5.

(*Second Sermon.*)

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This parable, as has already been intimated, is entirely different from the one recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Luke. True, the same image runs through both, that of a festival; yet they are different. For they were spoken on different occasions; that at a festival, this in the temple. That was delivered at an earlier period of our Lord's history, this at a later. When that was delivered, the Jews manifested a more friendly disposition, and hence their character is drawn in the parable in softer colors. But when this parable was spoken, their enmity was ready to break out into open violence. And in accordance with this altered state of facts, the parable is varied. There, they offended a host, here a King; there, they civilly excused themselves, here they treat the invitation with contempt,

and the messengers with hostility; there, the conduct of the invited was unkind, here it was high treason; there, they are punished by exclusion from the feast, here by that and the avenging armies of the great King, Still, much that has been said in exposition of the previous parable, will serve to cast light upon this and need not be repeated. I desire, therefore, to call your attention to the fifth verse: "But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise."

Increasing in wickedness, they did not deign longer to offer excuses for rejecting the gospel and continuing in a life of sin, but openly made light of the offered redemption. Not that they made sport of it or derided it, but (Greek, *amelasantes*) they were heedless, and stupidly indifferent toward it. It made no impression upon them, and so they went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise. That is, one of them was rich and full of this world's goods, and did not feel his need of living upon God and his fullness; and the other, though not rich, was struggling to become so; that is, he was looking to the broken reeds and cisterns of earth for his support and his joy, and not unto God. The causes of their conduct were:

I. Ignorance. Alas! that men are so ignorant of their chief good and of the way to attain it; so ignorant of the emptiness and vanity of earth, and of the fullness of Christ and God. Did they but know things, as they really are, they would die to the world and live to God—they would not crucify the Lord of glory—they would not call evil good,

nor good evil. They would arise in their misery and cry mightily to God, and he would give them that living water, and they would drink, and thirst no more forever. But the natural man has no idea of any repose, or peace, or security, or fullness of joy, but such as is of the earth, earthy.

1. Insensibility to divine things. They are utterly unconscious of their real character and state. They do not feel that they are spiritually diseased, and need healing; that they are dead, and need life; guilty, and need pardon; unholy, and need cleansing; weak, and need strength; blind, and need guidance; and, therefore, they never come to God, or Christ, for anything, and when these blessings are offered, "they make light of it."

2. And they are, not only *insensible* of their need of divine blessings, but are indisposed toward them. Their hearts say: "Who will show us any good" in these thing; and they say to God: "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Christ is to them, "as a root out of a dry ground, having no form nor comeliness; and when they see him, there is no beauty that they should desire him." As Israel, with the manna, their souls loathe the bread of heaven.

3. And some there are, who have a *positive enmity* against the whole gospel scheme. In their self-righteousness, pride and blindness they maintain that they are not sinners against God, and that they need no Savior or salvation. With infinite complacency, they reflect upon their many fancied virtues, and refuse the offered righteousness and the offered

sanctification. Of course, they make light of the gospel; they are utterly insensible and heedless of all it has to teach, or offer, and are angry with the Bible, because it accuses them of guilt and unholiness, and so they stop their ears against it. These self-righteous, infidel Pharisees are the most hopeless of all. Stoutly maintaining that their righteousness is good enough for God, and their hearts pure and pious enough for him and heaven, they reject the gospel scheme.

Other men admit they are sinners, but these will not. Others confess that they are unholy, but these men maintain that they are holy enough. "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"*

II. But that I may not labor in vain; that this discourse may have a practical bearing upon us all, I come to inquire who are they who make light of the gospel? And this is the more important, as many who profess it and seem to embrace it, and who try to suppose they have embraced it, do really make light of it. And now, feeling that I am engaged in a work of awful and solemn importance, I desire your closest attention, and the aid of your prayers. While I describe the various classes who make light of it, let every hearer continually ask, "Is it I?" If we judge ourselves, and repent, we shall not be judged; but if we deceive ourselves, we are forever undone. It is to me an awful thought that there may be some in this congregation who are deceiving and destroying themselves with a false

* Matthew xxiii. 33.

hope; that at the judgment day we will probably yield some to swell the number of that wretched throng, to whom the Judge shall say, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* Let us then see and know of a surety, this day, whether we are "making light" of the gospel or not.

1. That which we highly prize has a frequent and warm place in our thoughts. It is often in our minds. But not so with that about which we are indifferent. Now, what think ye of Christ and his salvation? Is it the first thing in your mind when you awake in the morning and the last when you go to sleep at night? Do your thoughts and affections, again and again, break away from the cares and labors of the day, and soar away to God and eternity, to Christ and salvation? And are these thoughts sweet, and do they burn within you? Is the name of Jesus as ointment poured forth, and his countenance as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars? Is his word your meditation day and night, and as sweet to your mouth as honey, yea, as honey in the honey-comb? Recollect for one moment. How often have you remembered God, with reverent, fervent joy, during the past week? How often, how long, and how delightfully has he occupied your thoughts during this sacred morning? And with what peace and joy and heavenly hunger and hope has your soul been filled? Alas, alas, a sad retrospect! You have been filled in head and heart with a trooping multitude of thoughts; thoughts of

* Matthew vii. 23.

business and of gain; thoughts of learning and ambition; thoughts of family, fields and flocks; of clerks, stores and shops; of clients and customers; of friendship and anger; thoughts of love and lust. A steady stream of busy, burning thoughts have rushed through all the channels of the soul, but the gospel feast was not in all your thoughts, or, if it was, only for a moment, and then cold and dull and lifeless. No! they did not occupy the first and great place in your heart. You know it; and by this test know that you make light of the gospel. Know that you are stupid and insensible and cold and dead! Know that however much you may have the form of godliness, you are denying the power thereof, and need to be converted to God. Arise and cry mightily to him, and give him no rest until he fill your heart with his love.

2. That which we highly esteem, and is much in our thoughts, will be a frequent and delightful theme of conversation. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And what, my hearers, is the general character of your conversation? Is it on heaven or on earth? Is it carnal or spiritual? How many professors of religion are intelligent and eloquent on every thing pertaining to earth and time, who have almost never a word on practical and experimental religion? Familiar with politics and science, with the current news and the social, political and economical condition of the various nations of the world; well informed even concerning the various religious denominations and the various benevolent movements of Christendom;

able to converse fluently upon them all; they are utterly unable to talk upon the work of Christ in the souls of men, and especially of that work in their own hearts. Here they hesitate, and are at a loss. Here they stammer, and blush and grow dumb. They can not say, with the singer of Israel, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."* "My heart is inditing a good matter: The things that I speak concern the King; my tongue shall be as the pen of a ready writer."† "While I live I will praise the Lord; I will sing paises unto my God while I have any being."‡ If you would know the true state of your hearts in reference to the gospel feast, just think for a little what is the general subject and tenor of your thoughts. And that I may not impose a task too great, take the week that has passed as a specimen. Words you have spoken, and words in abundance; words of praise and censure; of encouragement and discouragement; of truth and falsehood; of slander and detraction; of friendship and hatred; of business and care; and, it may be, words, cold, formal words of bodily worship. But has your conversation been with grace, seasoned with salt, that it might minister grace to the hearers? Hath your tongue before both God and man dwelt with rapture on this feast? Is that a theme which anoints your lips with honey, and sets your breath on fire? Again I say, examine, consider well. For by thy words thou shalt be

* Psalm lxvi. 16. † Psalm xlv. 1. ‡ Psalm cxlvi. 2.

justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

3. Nor let it be forgotten that men labor and travail to obtain that which they highly esteem, and make but little effort to obtain that which they set light by. So it is here. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."* Our efforts to obtain life eternal, and to make it sure, will be in proportion to our estimate of its importance. By how far we are from making light of it in our hearts, by so far will we be from making light of it in our practical and every-day life. If, in our souls, we esteem it "the one thing needful" and "the chief end of man," we will in our lives act accordingly. Now, dear friends, how is it with you? How will your lives bear this text? Should you die to-night, how many of you can tell how it would go with you? How many of you have made your calling and election sure? Nay! many of you are in doubt of your final salvation, and the fears of many more are stronger than their hopes. And what is your conduct under such circumstances? Are you filled with a holy and terrible dread of reprobation? And are you laboring with all the means in your power to make your calling and election sure? Do you resolve that you will not go into your house, nor rest in your bed, and that your eyes shall not take sleep, nor your eyelids slumber, until you have found a place of

* Matthew xiii. 44.

habitation in your hearts for the mighty God of Jacob?

Oh, if we only knew the worth of a soul, its danger and misery in a state of nature, we would feel and act differently. I declare unto you, that in my most serious hours, I *wonder* at sinners, and I wonder at those who are in a state of incertitude as to their final destiny. I wonder that men can eat, or drink, or sleep, or attend to any secular cares, while they believe or feel themselves to be under the wrath of God. Strange to see men laugh or jest, or be merry, who may the next hour be lost forever! Wondrous strange to see sinners trifle, while they stand on the slippery edge of damnation! The bare thought of the judgment and of the smoke of everlasting torment, ascending, day and night, forever and ever, is enough to deprive one of sleep, and were it not for the atoning blood of Christ of reason too. And surely it is because you make light of these things that you are able to make light of the atonement that offers you deliverance from them. And in my most serious and pungent sermons, when God most moves me and enables me to get nearest to your consciences, while I set life and death, heaven and hell, most vividly before you, I declare to you that I wonder at my coldness. I am ashamed of my weakness. I feel as if I could say nothing at all worthy of my solemn and awful theme. And when I meet you and part from you, without entreating you to be reconciled to God; when I spend a little while with you, in general conversation, and then

leave you, without earnestly entreating you, without, as it were, laying hold of you, to pull you out of the fire and compelling you with a holy violence to come to this feast, I feel as if I had been guilty of the blood of your souls.

But, oh, dear friends, be entreated now, at length, to awake, to arise, and cry mightily to God. Make one great and persistent effort to obey the gospel. Look up to God in Christ to help you and put strength in you; for as God liveth, and your soul liveth, there is but a step between you and death. Oh, if we valued salvation aright, how diligent would we be in using all means to obtain it! How we would watch and pray against danger! How we would mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts! How holy would we be in all our walk and conversation! How earnestly hear and study the word! How earnestly and continually pray! How careful in keeping our hearts; in avoiding temptation! How diligent in stirring up the grace of God! This one thing would we do; forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forward to those that are before, we would press to the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. One thing would we desire and seek to obtain that we might dwell in the house of the Lord forever. But one thing then would be needful; and we would seek first and mainly the kingdom of God and his righteousness, knowing that all things else would be added to us.

But now it requires but little observation to see that many professors are not with their whole hearts

intently set on salvation. It is easy to see that their hearts and their lives are worldly and carnal. They are of the earth, earthy, and speak of the earth. Their conversation and their labors are for gain and pleasure, or ambition, and not for life eternal. Men and women, pilgrims journeying to a judgment seat, and soon to be at the end of your journey, consider whether in the midst of all your professions you are not making light of the gospel of Jesus Christ—making light of the love and mercy and grace of God—making light of eternity and of your soul's salvation!

4. That which we highly prize we labor to obtain for others, especially for our families and friends; but not so with that we set light store by. The covetous parent labors to obtain wealth for his children. The vain, frivolous woman is chiefly careful to give her daughter an accomplished and fashionable education. How would your Christianity bear such a test as this? Are you laboring diligently for the salvation of your children, domestics, neighbors, and acquaintances? Are you doing all you can to bring your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Do you pray much with them and for them? Do you instruct them by example, as well as by precept? Do you make your houses, houses of God? And are the altar and the daily sacrifice within your dwelling? Do you walk with a perfect heart within your homes? Is it the deepest desire and prayer of your heart that your child's soul may live before God? Is your daily life such that your children and domestics can see that you prize their

salvation above every thing else? Oh, how many children of professors will rise up in judgment against their parents and guardians, and testify against them to their confusion! O parents! if you did not in your hearts make light of salvation; if it were a weighty thing with you; if it had all that solemnity and earnestness which it justly challenges at your hands, you would feel and act far differently from what you do now. Comparatively, you would care little whether your children were rich or poor, honored or despised, provided you could see them fearing God and walking in his ways. A desire to see them saved, to meet them in heaven and walk with them in white forever, would be for them your greatest desire; this the labor and prayer of your soul. And so, too, with your neighbors and friends, strangers and heathen. You would be anxiously and daily inquiring how you might do them good; how you might pull them out of the fire; how turn them to God; and you would grudge no labor, no sacrifice. You would spend money and time and labor like water. You would surrender yourselves and your children to labor in this undertaking. And when any scheme for spreading the gospel was presented, you would need no arguments and no appeals to awaken your sympathies and call forth your energies. Your only inquiries would be, "Is it scriptural? Is it feasible? Can I do anything in any way to advance it?" You know this is so. You know that if professors generally, and yourselves especially, did not make too light of the gospel; if you viewed it as God who gave his own

Son, or Christ, who gave himself, views it; as the Christians converted at the Pentecost viewed it; or as the Holy Scriptures require *you* to view it, you would be wholly intent on spreading it in the world and in converting men to God.

5. And all this you would do cheerfully and joyfully. For what men highly prize they can not buy too dear; but they will not give much for what they lightly esteem.

If you value salvation, as you should, there is nothing that you will not do to attain it. You will repent, believe and obey the gospel. You will deny yourselves all ungodliness and fleshly lusts. You will mortify your members which are on the earth—fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience;* and as He who calleth you is holy, so would you be holy in all manner of conversation.†

By this test also you may try yourselves. When you are called to salvation, through Christ, you are called to part with everything inconsistent therewith; and yet many of you will not do this. You are called to part with "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, with all malice;"‡ and yet many of you will not do it. You are called to put away all lying and cheating and swearing and Sabbath-breaking and drunkenness and revelings and banquetings; all pride and vanity; boastings and whisperings and envyings; and to

* Colossians iii. 5, 6. † 1 Peter i. 15. ‡ Ephesians iv. 31.

cultivate the opposite virtues; and yet many of you will not do this. In a word, you are called to cast aside every weight, and especially your besetting sins, that you may run with patience the race that is set before you in the gospel; and yet many of you will not do it. So long as you can follow God and mammon, Christ and the flesh, you follow both; but when you are required to part from one or the other, you part with Christ. Whenever your religion stands in the way of your wickedness; whenever your Bible and conscience stand in the way of your profit, or your pleasures, or your ambition, then you follow sin, and sacrifice Christ. Or, if you outwardly follow Christ, you do so reluctantly, not from love, but from fear and shame; while your heart follows your sin. If these things be so, your religion is vain. It will not stand in the judgment. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye can not serve God and mammon."* And does not the man who takes such courses make light of salvation? He loves the world and the things thereof, and he labors to obtain them. He considers nothing he can do too great an effort; but we can never persuade him to be fully in earnest about his soul. Follow him into his family. How cold and lifeless are his family devotions. Follow him to his closet, and do you find his soul melted and poured out in contrite sighs and tears; in fervent, wrestling prayers; in pious hearty resolutions? Follow him into the

* Matthew vi. 24.

world, and is God in all his thoughts? Far from it. And now does not this man make light of salvation? Is he in earnest about the eternal world? Does he act as a pilgrim and a stranger here? as the soldier of Christ, who fights the good fight of faith, in a battle where his soul is at stake? Nay! does he not often ridicule those who are thus conscientious? Does he not often say, "Where is the need of taking so much pains?" Does he not often charge the minister, who preaches faithfully the word, with being too strict, exacting too much; raising the standard of duty too high, just as if it were in his power to lower it at his pleasure?

And now what can you, what can any one, think of such a man, even if that one should be himself, except that he is making light of the gospel of Christ?

II. But I have dwelt sufficiently long on this point. I have offered sufficient helps, by which you may test your character, and now what is the result? Are not some of you forced to plead guilty? Alas! I know true and sincere Christians will be the first to condemn themselves. But still I hope there are those that while they acknowledge they are not so much in earnest as they ought to be, and as they desire to be, can, nevertheless, before God, say that they are in earnest; that if they were in earnest about anything in their lives, they are in earnest about this. I hope there are those who can, like Peter, appeal to their Savior, saying: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou *knowest* that I love thee."*

* John xxi. 17.

But are there not some here, many, alas! who are convinced in their hearts, that they are the persons meant in the text; that they have in very deed made light of the gospel; and that they are uninterested in the great salvation? Alas, I fear there are many!

And now *will* you any longer continue in a life of sin? If so, consider in addition to all I have said of a life of sin—

1st. That you make light of Him who did not make light of you.

2d. That you make light of matters of the greatest importance.

3d. That it is your own salvation you make light of.

4th. That you neglect *all*, for perishing trifles.

5th. That the time approaches quickly when you will not make light of it.

6th. That no other being makes light of it—neither God, nor the Holy Spirit, nor Christ, nor angels, nor saints in heaven, nor saints on earth, nor devils. All, all are in earnest, but you.

## SERMON XV.

# Parables of the Marriage Feast and Great Supper.

MATTHEW XXII. 1–13, AND LUKE XIV. 16–24.

(*Third Sermon.*)

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By the "feast" or "supper" in these parables, I need scarcely repeat, the blessings of salvation are intended. It is a favorite comparison with the Scriptures, and one which is often used. The manna from heaven and the water from the rock, by which the Church in the wilderness was nourished and refreshed, represent the grace of Christ, by which believers are nurtured into the fullness of spiritual manhood and ripened for heaven. And the promised land itself; that land so fat and so blessed; a land that drank in the suns and showers of heaven; upon which God set the loving eyes of his bountiful providence from year's end to year's end; which flowed with milk and honey; whose stones were iron and out of whose mountains one might dig brass; where you might eat bread without scarceness and

not lack any thing at all; a land blessed by the precious things brought forth by the sun; with the precious things put forth by the moon; with the chief things of the ancient mountains and the precious things of the lasting hills, and with the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush; where butter of kine and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats with the fat of the kidneys of wheat,* were to be the daily food of an obedient and holy people—this land, I say, with all its beauty and fullness, was but the dim, earthly type of the blessings of the beatific vision. It was the terrestrial shadow of the rest and the rejoicing, which are in reversion for the people of God. Often does the Savior represent the blessings of salvation as the "bread of life," "the bread from heaven," and "his flesh as meat indeed, and his blood as drink indeed." In the book of Proverbs, where Wisdom personified stands for Christ, and the spiritual building erected by her stands for the covenant of redemption, with all its rich living heritage of treasure, this language is used: "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens; she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither; and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled."†

Isaiah, that evangelical prophet who delights in

* Deuteronomy xxxii. 14; xxxiii. 14–16. † Proverbs ix. 1–5.

every grand and beautiful figure, of course, employs this one over and over. Saith he: "In this mountain" (*i. e.*, the Church) "shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things; of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."* And again, when he calls men to holiness and virtue, through Jesus Christ, his language is: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."†

Again: the mutual fellowship in gifts and graces, between Christ and believers, in the covenant of redemption, is likened unto a feast. Saith Jesus to his Church, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!"‡ And again he saith, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."§

The servants sent forth by Jesus Christ, the Mas-

* Isaiah xxv. 6. † Isaiah lv. 1–3. ‡ Canticles v. 1.
§ Revelation iii. 20.

ter of the house, to call men to the feast, represent, in the first place, ministers of the gospel, the twelve apostles, the seventy disciples, and all those who in every subsequent age have succeeded them in the sacred office. For Jesus Christ has not only purchased the grace of salvation, but he has also ordained the office of the Christian ministry, that "this good news and tidings of great joy" may be published and proclaimed abroad, and that men everywhere be called to repentance and faith, and be instructed in all things which belong to their everlasting peace. He hath given apostles, evangelists and prophets, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, and it is through their instrumentality that a work of grace is carried on in the world, and that men are saved.* For faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. True! "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"† Christ not only instituted the ministry in the beginning, but it is his will that it shall be continued unto the end. To those sent forth first he gave an injunction to transmit their office to worthy successors, saying,

* Ephesians iv. 11–13. † Romans x. 13–15.

"That which has been intrusted to thee commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also, and, lo, I am with you each and always, even to the end of the world."* "My word at thy mouth shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."†

Nor are Christian ministers the only servants employed in this work by the great Master. Co-operating with them, in every man's soul, is the conscience. It, too, is God's servant. By it he utters the "still small voice" to every man's heart, who hears the word. With both he co-operates by his holy providences, by his Holy Spirit, by his holy angels, and by the living members of his Church on earth. By all these agencies and instrumentalities are men called to the gospel feast—called to turn from dumb idols to the service of the living God—called from darkness to light—from death to life—from sin to holiness, and from hell to heaven.

Let it then be the duty of this hour to note narrowly the offer and the invitation which is made to the sons of men.

1. There is here made an offer of salvation to *every* man. There is to be no distinction and no partiality in preaching Christ to the sons of Adam. All are lost—all are totally lost—utterly ruined and undone. To all is the offer of salvation to be made, and to all alike. We are not to preach the gospel to the white and withhold it from the black, nor to

* Matthew xxviii. 19, 20. † Isaiah lv. 11.

the rich while we withhold it from the poor. We are not to go to the virtuous, the intelligent, the influential only, but to the vicious, the ignorant, the oppressed, and the down-trodden as well. To Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free; to the European, Asiatic, African and American; to Celt, Saxon and Slavonian; to the children of Shem, Ham and Japheth alike, are the sweet sounds of heaven's mercy to be uttered. Upon the ears of civilized and savage alike are we to roll the numbers of this glad anthem forth, *Peace on earth, good will to men.* To the natives of the cloud-capped mountain and the sunny plain, to those who battle for life with Arctic snow and storm, and those who revel in plenty amid the green and flowery fields of our own magnificent and variegated landscapes, are we to go with the melting story of redeeming love. The servants are not to rest from their mission, when they have traversed the broadways and main streets of the city, and made the tender of life and glory to the merchant princes, who inhabit those palatial residences, but they are to go out to the "lanes and alleys of the city." They are not to confine their attention to the moral and orderly and virtuous, but to bring "the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind" as well. Yea, they are "to go out into the high ways and hedges" of the whole earth, and bring in to the supper of the great God, "all, as many as they can find, both bad and good;" and that church, congregation or pastor, that confines attention and effort exclusively, or mainly, to some

class or classes of men, and neglects others, is far from the path of duty. To do, as some ministers do, confine effort mainly to the children and adherents of some one denomination, or tribe, or nation, or creed, is to be guilty of little less than high treason to God and man. And when poor and vicious, black and barbarous persons are induced, by a living pastor and a living membership, to come to the church and attend on the public ordinances; if the people of that congregation are too proud and too fashionable to receive them kindly and cordially, and take them by the hand and encourage them, and do all they can to strengthen and deepen and fix their nascent purposes of reform — if the congregation feels that these poor, degraded people are to be cast out of their church or thrust into a corner, *such* a congregation is "nigh unto cursing." Those very publicans and harlots, those drunkards and gamblers and thieves, bad as they may be, who are thus thrust out and treated with contempt or with coolness, are nearer the kingdom of heaven than these proud, self-righteous, hard-hearted Pharisees. There is more hope of the salvation of those than of these. A true pastor and a true church will always act in the spirit of the injunction, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Go ye, disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." All true Christians on earth will join with all the ransomed hosts of heaven, in rejoicing over one sinner that repenteth, even though that sinner

should have been a pariah before. Nothing is more inimical to the interests of the Church and nothing more opposite to the Spirit of Christ, than a rich, proud, formal, fashionable congregration, which makes no effort to preach the gospel to the poor and all other men.

Let us, then, remember that the offer of the gospel is to be made to all men, to all indiscriminately, and without exception. To all and without exception. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."* Yea, let him. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life, and the Son came not to heal the well, but the sick—not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

And hearers, whosoever you be, we do this day, in God's great and gracious name, offer you salvation and pray you in Christ's stead, "be ye reconciled to God." If you will, you may and shall be saved. No matter what be your past history, or present character, to you is the word of this salvation sent. If you desire to be saved and turn to God and trust in Christ you shall be saved. Jesus is no respecter of persons. He has said: "Come unto me, *all* ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."† And lest your crimes, or your depravity, or something else, should deter you, he adds: "Him

* Revelation xxii. 17. † Matthew xi. 28.

that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."* "In no wise"—blessed word! Note it well. On no account, for no consideration, will I reject him! I will not cast him out because he is an old sinner, or an ignorant, or a hardened, or a backslidden, or a poor, or a polluted sinner. Poor, perishing man, this is the message we have been commissioned to deliver unto you in his name to-day! "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"†

2. The offer of salvation is full. Not only to every man, but a *full* salvation to every man. Salvation, *i. e.*, deliverance from all evil and the tender of all good, is offered to every man. Jesus does not offer to do part, if the sinner will do part; but he offers you a full and great salvation! Have you committed many sins, and are you very guilty before God, and are you in danger of perishing forever from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power? Jesus offers to take and bear all your sins himself. He offers to suffer all the penalty due to you, and thus free you from hell forever. Are you under legal bondage and terror? Do your sins, frightful in multitude and turpitude, red as wrath and black as despair, rise up around you, and threaten to crush and cover you forever? He offers to bear all your griefs, and carry all your sorrows. He offers you full pardon for all. He

* John vi. 37. † Ezekiel xxxiii. 11.

offers to remove your sins, as far from you as the east is from the west. He says: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."* He says to you, as he said to Israel, on the sandy shores of the sounding sea, "The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever."† O then guilty man, trembling at the base of the lightning-crisped and thunder-gashed Sinai, and fearing to come into the burning presence of the awful Jehovah, "Look to me—trust me—Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."‡

Trembling son, of Adam born, to you I call. To you, I say, in God's and Jesus' name, you are offered the pardon of every sin, if you will only trust Christ and turn to God. Nor is this all; you are not only offered the instant and full pardon of all your sins; Jesus not only offers to drown the fires of hell in the living fountain, flowing from his pierced side—He offers you more. He offers you *his* righteousness. When you stand and tremble at the thought of death and of judgment, you feel that if you were only righteous; as righteous as the holy law of God requires you to be; as righteous as Adam before he fell; as righteous as the sweet, white-winged, dove-eyed, sweet-voiced angels around the throne; as righteous as Jesus when he ascended up on high; as righteous as God himself;

* Isaiah xliii. 25. † Exodus xiv. 13. ‡ Isaiah i. 18.

then you would not be afraid to die and stand before the judgment seat of God! Now, man, woman, do you really want to be righteous before God? Do you want to be perfectly righteous, as righteous as holy Adam, as righteous as elect angels, as Jesus Christ himself? Oh would you not rejoice and leap for joy at the very thought? Behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy! Jesus offers to make you righteous. Jesus offers you *his* righteousness, "even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe."*

Be not then in despair in regard to your sins. Christ offers you a full pardon for all. Be not in despair in regard to your need of righteousness. He offers you his righteousness. Come to him; trust your all to him, and yours shall be the unutterable blessedness of the man to whom the Lord will not impute iniquity, and to whom he will impute righteousness without works.† Yea, trust Jesus, and in him you shall have righteousness and strength, for his name is "the Lord our Righteousness."

Men and women, in God's and Jesus' name, I offer you the righteousness of Christ; receive him, and then fear death and the judgment seat no more at all, "for he is the end of the law of righteousness to every one that believeth,"‡ and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."§ How can there be? Your sins

* Romans iii. 22. † Psalm xxxii. 1, 2. Romans iv. 6–8.
‡ Romans x. 4. § Romans viii. 1.

are all washed away in his blood; your iniquities are expiated in the atonement of Christ; your guilt removed as far as the east is from the west; your person clothed in the immaculate robes of the risen and reigning Jesus, invested with a better righteousness than Adam, or angel, or any celestial creature ever had, the righteousness of God received by faith in Jesus Christ. How can you be condemned?

Nor is this all that Christ offers to do for you. He offers to *sanctify* you also. He not only offers to take you to heaven, but to make you fit for heaven; not only to put his righteousness upon you and make you happy, but to put his Spirit and his image in you and make you holy. Often it may be, you have lamented the strength and virulence of sin that dwelleth in you; often bemoaned the deep and desperate ungodliness of your nature; often and earnestly endeavored to break the chains of sin and Satan and lead a Christian life. But never could you succeed. Many the device and expedient to which you have resorted, but in vain. You have found that though you washed you with snow water and made your hands never so clean, yet you would plunge into the ditch again, until your own clothes would abhor you. You have made resolution after resolution; tried plan after plan; consulted one friend and guide after another; like the woman with the sore disease, you have spent all you had on many physicians and are nothing the better, but rather grow worse; and now, at last, you are ready to despair

of ever being fit to pass the pearly gates and walk the golden streets of the glass-like city—of ever being meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. But be of good cheer, Jesus' name is Jehovah-ropheka, the Lord that healeth thee.* He is a Physician willing and able to save the sin-sick soul. If you are willing to be made whole, I have good news for you. I am come with the offer of a *full* salvation. I am charged to tell thee that Jesus offers to heal thy leprosy and make you white as snow; to give you a new heart and to write his law in it, and impress his image on it; that he offers to make you a new creature; to make you know truth in the inner part; to make you all glorious within; to sanctify your whole spirit, and soul and body, and to present you faultless before the throne, with exceeding great joy, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blame before him in love. And remember this offer is to all; to you, man and woman, no matter who or what you have been or are. To every soul under heaven, to every human being out of hell, to whom I can possibly obtain access, I am authorized and enjoined to make this offer of holiness—of perfect holiness. If you desire it and trust Jesus, and will give yourself to him, you shall be holy.

You fear you shall never be fit for heaven; but Jesus offers to make you so. He offers to make you a new and immaculate creature; to make you a partaker of the divine nature; to make you like

* Exodus xv. 26.

unto himself. And if you will only take him at his word, he will do it. For he is faithful and true. His word and promise may be depended on; for he is not man that he should lie. He is the God of truth. Heaven and earth may pass away, but his word shall not pass away. It shall be fulfilled to the uttermost jot. None are ashamed that trust in him. Then let the anxious, despairing soul, bound with the cords of all lusts and sin, and taken captive by Satan at his will, come to Christ for sanctification. Trust him, ye servants of sin, and you shall soon learn the glorious liberty of the children of God. Trust him, and though you have long lain among the pots, ye shall be like the dove whose wings are covered with silver and its feathers with gold. Trust him and he will give you strength —he will shortly bruise Satan under your feet. Your soul shall tread down strength, and shall be lifted up in the ways of the Lord. He will teach your hands to war, your fingers to fight, and your arms to break the bows of steel in pieces. You shall break through troops. You shall overleap every wall and overpass every barrier, and go on from strength to strength until at last, with happy feet, you shall stand before the Son in Zion. But why do I thus deal in detail? In one word, he offers you everything, absolutely *everything*, necessary to your comfort and usefulness in this life, or to prepare you for eternal glory in the life to come. He will give you grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Some of you are ambitious of more wealth, more power,

more learning, or more reputation—and faith in Jesus Christ is the short, sure way of being filled with all the fullness of God. Receive him, trust him, cleave to him, follow him, and all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's. Are you ignorant, and do you want more light? Look to Christ! He is a Prophet and Teacher come from God to instruct you. He is a Light to lighten the Gentiles, the true Light to lighten every man.

He will instruct you and teach you, and, with his eye set upon you, he will show you direction. Do you need more strength? Look unto Jesus. He is an Almighty God, and offers to make his strength perfect in your weakness. Are you in trouble and darkness? Are the storms beating upon you? Is deep calling unto deep? Look to Jesus! He is the very God of consolation, the God of peace, and he offers you peace, offers you joy unspeakable and full of glory; a joy and peace which no man taketh from you. Are you poor and needy in this world's things? Look unto Jesus! The earth is his, and the fullness thereof, and so your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure.

Oh, said I not well that Jesus offers you a *full* salvation? embracing everything you can possibly need in body, soul and spirit, in time and throughout eternity. Receive him, trust him, and all shall be yours.

"The lions young may hungry be,
And they may lack their food,
But they that truly seek the Lord,
Shall not lack any good."

3. Once more: the gospel offers you a *free* salvation. It does not make these offers on some hard, impracticable terms to be performed by you. It does not offer them to you on any *condition*, hard or easy, whatever. It brings a full and great salvation, including pardoning mercy, justifying righteousness, and sanctifying grace, together with all the benefits, in time and eternity, that flow from them. I say it roundly and absolutely—I say it, in sight and hearing of heaven and earth—I say it with unutterable emotions of holy exultation—it brings all these infinite blessings and lays them down at every man's door, aye! at *your* door. Yea, clothed with a divine commission, I bring them and lay them down in your laps this very hour! Will you have them? I charge you nothing for them. God, the good and gracious, asks you nothing for them—absolutely, nothing at all!

Here is a *full*, a *great*, a *free* salvation, offered in God's name to every one of you this moment. Will you accept it? It is offered as an absolutely free gift. If you will take it, it is yours. If you will only consent to it, in your very heart of hearts, you are a saved sinner this very moment. Do not tell me, you must repent first, or reform first, or do something else first. This is to make God a liar. This is to reject the counsel of God to your own

ruin. I tell you, I am commissioned by the Lamb slain for you, to preach grace, free grace to all!

I am authorized to offer you this great salvation without any conditions at all. If you will accept it, it is yours—all yours—forever yours. Do you say, You can not repent? Repentance is one of the very things Christ offers to give you.* Do you say your faith is weak? Jesus is the Author and Finisher of faith. Consent to be saved by him, and unto you it shall be given, on the behalf of Christ to believe.† Do you say your heart is hard and corrupt? To give you a new heart and right spirit, to sanctify you in your whole spirit and soul and body, is the very thing Jesus offers to do. It is not said, "Let every one that repenteth, believeth, reformeth," etc., but "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."‡ It is not said, "Whosoever is moral and virtuous, and what not, may receive mercy," but, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."§ It is not said, "Whosoever has not done much to offend me and ruin himself shall be saved;" but, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls;"‖ and, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."¶ Surely, if you appear before the judgment seat without "the

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*Acts v. 31. † Philippians i. 29. ‡ Revelation xxii. 17. §Isaiah lv. 1. ‖ Matthew xi. 28, 29. ¶ John vi. 37.

wedding garment," you will be "speechless."* You will have no excuse at all. A full and great salvation, complete in everything, has been offered to you, freely offered to you, without money, without price, and without condition. If you will have it, you may. Consent, oh, consent, and from this moment you are a saved man. God is your Father, Jesus is your Savior, the Holy Spirit your sanctifier, your guide, your strength and your comforter. All the blessings of the new and well ordered covenant are yours, and heaven is your home. Believe it on the sure testimony of God's word. All this is offered to you, now, in God's name. And if you will but consent, it is yours. Oh, men and women, born and living in sin and misery, and posting on to death and the judgment, what ails you at God, that you will not believe and be saved? What diabolical spell of magical incantation blinds your minds and steels your hearts to the things which belong to your peace, your ineffable and everlasting peace?

In fine, the offer is an earnest and importunate one. Ministers are required to urge it upon your attention, with the utmost earnestness and eagerness. They are to "go out quickly and compel men to go in"—to compel them, not by physical coercion, as the papal commentators have it, but by *moral* coercion. They are to accept no excuse. They are to be baffled by no objection; they are to be disheartened by no stupid obstinacy. They are to use all the arts of a compassionating love and all the moving motives in the world of God. They are

* Matthew xxii. 12.

"to watch for souls;" they are "to pull them out of the fire," "to be instant in season and out of season." They are to endure hardness, to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; to make full proof of their ministry; to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and not count their lives dear unto themselves, that so they may finish their course with joy, and be able to take God himself for their witness, that they are pure from the blood of all men.

And God himself is earnest and urgent. He says so, and has shown it in the whole scheme of redemption; in the whole spirit and tenor of his word, and in the whole course of his providence. To doubt it, is to make God a liar, and blaspheme him in your hearts.

And now why will you die? Why will ye not consent to be saved? Do you love sin more than you love God? Are you so deeply and dreadfully infatuated, as to prefer the pleasures of sin for a season, to all the privileges, honors and joys unutterable and eternal, of this great salvation. Will ye not be convinced and change? Will ye not repent and be converted? Wonder and be astonished, O ye heavens, at this! Why, the most brutish ox knoweth his owner, the most stupid ass knoweth his master's crib, and how is it that men, educated, intelligent, shrewd, far-seeing men and women, will neither know nor consider? Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; the turtle, the crane, the swallow and every bird of passage the time of their coming; but this people do not

know, and will not consider the things which concern their high and eternal well-being. Be that as it may, I call God for a record on my soul, this day, that I am pure from your blood, and that I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.

Yea, I call heaven and earth, God, angels and men, to record against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life that thou and thy seed may live; and if ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; for I denounce unto you that ye shall surely perish. But perhaps you ask me, "How may I be certain that if I now consent and turn to God, he will receive and save me?" My answer is, "You have God's word for it." He says he will. He has said it over and over! He has confirmed it again and again by his great oath.* He has sealed it by the blood of his Son. That word may be trusted, for there is truth in God. It is impossible that he should lie. You can have no other assurance better than that. The concurring testimony of all signs and wonders, of all worlds, and ages, all ranks and orders, the wide universe over, is not equal to one word from God. I repeat, believe and all is yours. Consent, accept the free offer of a great and glorious salvation, and you shall instantly have it all. "Whereby may I know this?" Hardly have the words escaped your lips, until all the angels in heaven, and all the devils in hell, and all the stars of light and the sons of the morning

* Ezekiel xxxiii. 11. Hebrews vi. 17.

gather round and testify that it is even so. Astonished at the miracle, your doubts are all dispelled, your fears all dispersed, like a morning mist, and you yield your souls to the Savior's care, and go home rejoicing and saying, "We have seen and heard strange things to-day, whereof we are glad."

O fools! fools! fools! and slow of heart to believe! For whether is greater the angels and devils, saints and stars, or the God of truth, who made them all? If ye would receive the testimony of creatures, the testimony of the Creator is greater, and why then should ye doubt it? If on their testimony you would consent, and, without doubting, yield your souls to Jesus and depart from this house shouting for the hope of the glory of God, then how much more should you do so, when you have the very word of the living God on which to trust? O man! will you make God a liar? Was it for this you came here to-day?

## SERMON XVI.

# The Parable of the Ten Virgins.

MATTHEW XXV. 1–13.

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This parable asserts the duty of Christian watchfulness and of preparation for the second coming of Christ. In the previous part of his discourse, he had foretold his second coming. He did not specify the time of that coming, but leaving it unknown, and, therefore uncertain, he exhorts his followers to be ready. Chapter xxiv. 30–51.

But death is a period when the Son of Man cometh, as well as the end of the world; and I suppose the parable has reference to both these events, and exhorts and warns us to prepare for both.

Nor is the exhortation unnecessary—not unnecessary for professing Christians even—for many of them, growing careless and cold, will be surprised by the sudden advent of the last hour. The day and the dispensation of grace shall be suddenly ended to them by death, or by the end of all things, fill them, perhaps, with sudden alarms,

and, if it finds them unprepared, overwhelm them with utter remorse and endless despair.

"The kingdom of heaven" in this parable, as it generally does in the Gospels, signifies not the kingdom of glory, but the gospel dispensation, the visible, militant Church.

"The bridegroom" means Jesus Christ. Psalm xlv. Revelation xix. 7. Song of Solomon. Isaiah liv. 5. The bride is the ransomed Church, the whole company of the elect, redeemed and brought home to glory.

The virgins, wise and foolish, represent the members of the visible Church. Not only real Christians, but all who profess to be such, are repeatedly, in Scripture, called virgins, because of their pure profession and (in the case of those who are Christians indeed) of their pureness of heart. On earth there is not an emblem of moral purity and loveliness more apt than this or one more frequently used in the Holy Scriptures. Psalm xlv. 2 Corinthians xi. 2. Song of Solomon i. 3. Revelation xiv. 4.

The whole parable is founded on the nuptial rites of the time and country where it was first spoken. In those rites the following things are worthy of notice:

The ceremony was concluded at night. The bridegroom, attended by his youthful companions (children of the bride-chamber, Matthew ix. 15; friends of the bridegroom, John iii. 29. Judges xiv. 11), goes to the house of the bride and leads her home, she being attended by some of her young

friends and companions from the house. (Psalm xlv. 14, 15.) In the meantime, others of them, the virgins of our parable, await the procession on the way, returning and falling in, enter with the bridegroom into the house, when the door is immediately closed to shut out intruders and for the convenience of the guests.

The procession, taking place at night, was accompanied with torch lights, or "lamps," as they are called in our text. Strips of flax or cotton, wrapped around a piece of iron, which was inserted in a wooden handle and dipped in oil and ignited, constituted the torch. The torch thus formed, and ignited, required to be frequently replenished with oil, to prevent its burning out. The oil for this purpose was carried in a vessel with the torch.*

The marriage festivities, to which the virgins were admitted, emblemize the splendors, glories and joys of the heavenly state, to which believers are admitted after death, and especially after the resurrection. They are that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" pledged in the promise and "kept in store" against the day of "the manifestation of the sons of God"—that glorious day when the heavenly bridegroom cometh.

The lamps or torches, lit and burning, are the preparation which professed Christians make for the coming of Christ at death and at the judgment. All professors of religion are supposed to make some preparation, more or less, but while the preparation of some is adequate, that of others is fatally

* Jahn's Arch. 154.

deceptive. "They took no oil in their vessels with their lamps."

With these general statements, let us now return upon the parable and note, *seriatim*, the things which seem more especially to challenge our attention.

1. "*Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins.*" Those who are members of the visible Church, and who stand in professed connection with the Redeemer, will be found, in character and condition, as different as the ten virgins here spoken of. For they are not all Israel, who are of Israel. They are not all Christians, who name the name of Christ. There ever has been in the Church, and unto the end there will be, the tares growing among the wheat; the bad fish with the good, caught in the gospel net; those with the wedding garment, and those without it, at the gospel feast. There was a Cain in the family of Adam, a Ham in the Ark, a Korah with Moses, an Ahithophel with David, and a Judas in the family of the Savior. If all, who profess Christ in word, were Christians indeed, then the judgment would be revealed before its time. But it is not so. The Church, like the individual believer, "is, as it were, the company of two armies." Let no one of you, my dear hearers, flatter himself that he shall surely be saved, merely because he is a professor of religion and a member of the Christian Church. It is as easy, and a far more terrible thing, to perish in the Church as in the world that lieth in sin.

2. "*The ten virgins.*" The exact number ten

here is of no importance, except as that it took this number (among the Jews) to make a company. (Trench, page 202.) It far more concerns us to observe that Christians are here, and elsewhere, emblemized as virgins, to denote the purity, simplicity and sincerity of character, and the ardor of and uncalculating, self-sacrificing and steadfast love, which should characterize them. Christians, to be worthy of their name and calling, must be of pure heart, clean hands and guileless tongue. They must hate garments spotted by the flesh and keep themselves unspotted from the world. They must yield themselves entirely up to God and serve him instantly, day and night, with a pure heart fervently. They must know truth in the inner part. They must be all-glorious within, and be clothed with robes of spotless righteousness. Their life and conversation must be such as become godliness. Their hearts must cleave in loyal, steadfast love to God, and to him only. They must flee fleshly lusts which war against the soul. They must put away filthiness and foolish talking and jesting. They must be meek, humble, merciful and pure in heart. They must be pure and peaceable and gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Having been espoused, as chaste virgins unto Christ, they must be faithful to their espousals. They must trust and hope in Christ, their betrothed alone. They must be dead to the world and alive to Him. They must prepare for his coming, and continually wait for it. They must wash their robes and make them white in the

blood of the Lamb. They must have their lamps trimmed and burning, and the "oil of heavenly grace" in their vessels with their lamps. Such a life must they lead who would walk in white with Christ in heaven.

3. But not thus did all the virgins, for "*five were foolish*," or, as it might be rendered, "*improvident*." These foolish virgins are *professed*, but not real Christians. They are "with us, but not of us." They are in the Church, but not of the Church. These foolish virgins are not the ignorant and beastly heathen, nor the fanatical followers of Mohammed, nor the superstitious idolaters of Rome worshiping saints and angels, and bread and wine. Nor yet are they such open and careless sinners as we see every day around us; not openly godless, and Christless and profane.

Nor yet are they deliberate hypocrites, putting on religion *merely as a mask* to deceive, and thus pave the way for deeper deeds of darkness. They take the lamp of a public profession, and their lamp is lit and burning; and just for the present, all seems ready. The light of their profession and piety shines with some brightness for a brief space. They attend upon the ordinances of religion. They frequent the solemn assemblies. They receive the holy sacraments. Their religious feelings are warm for awhile. They appear to others to be indeed Christians, and they esteem themselves such.

Like "the stony-ground" hearers, in the parable of the sower, the seed of truth springs up quickly and grows rapidly for a time. Like Herod, they

do many religious works and hear the gospel gladly. The flaxen flambeau burns brightly for a time, though not fed with oil; and the stony-ground hearer for a time shines and sings, though never anointed with an unction from on high. If he speaks with the tongue of men and of angels, as he discourses of the wonders of redemption, he is, nevertheless, nothing but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. He may have made great attainments in religious knowledge, even so as to understand all mysteries and knowledge, and yet have nothing of that heaven-born charity which is essential to Christian character. To his wisdom and his eloquence he may add many a good work; he may bestow all his goods to feed the poor, and rather than renounce his profession may give his body to be burned, and yet be an unsound professor—a foolish virgin. Hopes of heaven and of future glory may beat high in his bosom, and he may look forward with most agreeable anticipations to death and the eternal world, and yet be deceiving himself all this while—yea, even continue to deceive himself until the very last; for thus the foolish virgins did; and then in the last hour, as he is summoned into the presence of the Judge, his hope may be as the giving up of the ghost. All this may be; and all this will be, with any professor who is in the case of the improvident virgins.

4, "*They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*" Oil here signifies the Holy Spirit, shed abroad in his gracious influences upon

the soul. This is the fixed, and in the New Testament, I believe, the invariable significancy of the word, when used figuratively. (Psalm xlv. 7; lxxxix. 20; xcii. 10; xxiii. 5. 2 Corinthians i. 21. Hebrews i. 9. 1 John ii. 20–27.)

Hence to have torches, but no oil to feed them, is to make a profession and to go through the outward forms of religion, but yet to be destitute of a truly renewed and gracious heart. Such a soul, much exercised about religion in a superficial way, has never been truly renewed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost. As the flaming torch with an oilless vessel, so is this busy religion with an unchanged heart—it lacks that which gives it power and continuance. The Pharisees were just such foolish virgins. For with all their busy (and in some cases sincere) zeal, he who knows the heart, "knew that they had not the love of God abiding in them." Their faith was only a temporary faith, like Herod's, and of so many others in every age.

*But not so with the wise.* They took oil in their vessels with their lamps. They started right in the outset. They made sure work of turning to God. They did not compound the matter with conscience. They heartily renounced the world, the flesh and the devil. They cordially embraced Christ as all in all. They received the Holy Ghost. They were born again and were renewed in the spirit of their minds. They had the lamps, and they had oil also. They had the form of godliness, and they had also its power. They professed the name of Christ; they also possessed his image and his spirit—they were

like him, in the frame and temper of his mind, both toward God and toward men. Did they wear a devotional countenance? They also had devout spirits. Did they profess to be pilgrims and strangers in the earth? They were so indeed. They steadfastly set their faces to go to the heavenly land. They sought a city—a city that had foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Did they stand up for God's laws and truth and contend for them against a scoffing and angry world? This they did not in the spirit of faction or party or sect, but because they really loved those laws and that truth, and prized them above all that earth holds most valuable and dear. They could appeal to the Searcher of hearts and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus Christ in his person, offices and work was precious above all things to them.

5. But let me not describe an ideal character. Let me not teach that they became sinlessly perfect in this life—that they were without weakness and stain. "*While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.*" These words may be understood as giving a description either of the state of the Church at the end of the world or of professing Christians at death.

(1.) First, they may be viewed as giving a description of the state of the Church at the end of the world. "The bridegroom tarried" until the virgins, weary with waiting, nodded and slept. The second coming of Chist was to be deferred for a long period after his resurrection and ascension

into heaven—deferred until many of the members of the Church weary with waiting should cease to watch and wait. It was to be deferred so long that the wicked world would scoff at the very idea, saying: "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."* Nor will this be confined to the world. It will reach the Church, and many nominal Christians will say in their hearts, "My Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite their fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken."† Yea, we are assured that even in the Church, and among professed Christians, perilous times shall come in the last days. "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of goldliness, but denying the power thereof."‡ Yea, the Holy Spirit "speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."§ Prophecy is dis-

* 2 Peter iii. 3, 4. † Matthew xxiv. 48, 49. ‡ 2 Timothy iii. 1–5. § 1 Timothy iv. 1–3.

tinct and clear in pronouncing that after the glorious millennium of holiness and happiness, Satan must be loosed for a little season and go out and deceive the nations, and gather them together to battle against the Church and cause of God; and that there shall be a great and lamentable falling away. Our text and some other passages seem distinctly to declare that true Christians, like Lot in Sodom, like Noah among the antediluvians, like Peter among the Judaizers of his time, will be affected more or less by the evil times that shall fall upon them. Even the wise virgins "nodded and slept." Nor is it strange that it should be so. For as long as human nature remains what it now is, "evil communications must corrupt good manners." And at the second coming of Christ, the same thing will be true of even real Christians that had been always true before, viz: that "when iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold." And so rapid and so general will be the spread of the evil that the Scriptures declare that the second coming of Christ will hardly find faith upon the earth; and will find true piety depressed and discouraged, and flagrant and enormous infidelity, sensuality, selfishness and sin wide-spread and havocking the earth, and turning it into a terrestrial pandemonium.

(2.) Secondly, the words "nodding and sleeping" may be understood as descriptive of the moral state of many true Christians, when their Lord comes for them at death. Death is to the believer a coming of his Lord. John xiv. 3, 18, 28. It is especially in this sense that Jesus, in the previous

part of the discourse (Matthew xxiv. 30–51), and in paralell passages, urges to watchfulness and preparation. The apostles and primitive Christians were fully advised that the final judgment would not take place in that day, but was a distant event. They knew that many prophecies were to be fulfilled, many purposes to be accomplished, much time to transpire, many generations to live and die before the final consummation of all things.* Also they knew they must die, and often spoke of dying. To Peter, it had not only been revealed that he must die, but die the death of a martyr.† The great body of the Church in that early day knew they must die, knew they would not live until the end of the world, and yet in this discourse, over and over again, the apostles and disciples are exhorted to watch and be prepared for *His* coming. It must be His coming at death that is mainly intended; and it is to this the words, "while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept," have a principal reference.

And how often has this sŏlemn and startling fact been verified! How generally is it verified in the history of professors, both true and false, both wise and foolish! When first the sinner has been converted to Gŏd, what fervency of heart, what religious life and zeal does he manifest! How speedily does he hasten to light the lamp of the Christian profession and go forth to await the coming glory! His is the warmth and the glow and the gush of a first love. How often does he look with kindling

* 2 Thessalonians ii. 1–12. † John xxi. 18, 19.

eye and swelling bosom into the crystal depth above him, and count the time and chide the tardy hours that delay him from his home! He walks by faith. He feeds and feasts on the promises. His hope is anchored within the vail. His soul is on fire. His heart is filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. If you see him, there is a glory in his eye and a glory on his cheek. O! how differently all things seem to him from what they did before; old things have passed away and behold all things have become new. He longs for heaven. "He is sick of love."

But the kingdom tarries. The chariot of death does not bring his great and dear Redeemer down. Earth hath its cares. The world has its wants. Life has its battles and its struggles and its sorrows. Fortune smiles and lures. Adversity frowns. Dangers lower. The senses are ensnared by a thousand baits. The heart is darkened and chilled by a thousand clouds. And now what is the result? The believer's spirituality has been damaged. He has not lost his first love entirely, but it is not what it was. He has been too much engrossed with the cares and sorrows of the world. *He is nodding and sleeping.* Alas! alas! How true a picture is this of many a real Christian. Jesus has something against him, for he has forgotten his first love. Alas! that he could so far forget to look and long for the coming of the bridegroom—that glorious event for which all creation is groaning. Romans viii. 18–24.

6. But while immersed and engrossed in these

worldly cares, the soul is harassed with temptations and the heart with carnal passions, the chariot of death comes. Jesus unexpectedly comes; comes at such a time as men think not; comes at midnight; comes when the soul, filled with the cares of this life, is in a spiritual slumber, in a deep sleep.

At midnight the great cry is made, "*The bridegroom cometh.*" While professors are busy with the world, while they are full of schemes and plans and hopes for the future, and are but coldly thinking of eternity and of heaven, they receive the distinct monitions of death. Fever, with its tongue of fire, cries out, "Prepare to meet thy God." Famine and pestilence and earthquakes proclaim, "Prepare to meet thy God." Sickness of whatever kind, disasters with a thousand tongues, call aloud, "Prepare to meet thy God." And prepare these professors must. Death has come. Christ has come. And now they must be ready for heaven, or lose it forever. Oh, what a solemn summons to the sleeping virgins!

7. "*Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.*" The dying professor hastens to trim his lamp—is diligent to set his soul in order. He desires to be sure of the blessed joys of an eternal heaven now. He stirs up his soul. He redoubles religious diligence. He examines his soul. He scrutinizes his graces and his religious experience. He at once shakes off his slumber, lets go the world, and with the solemnity which befits the awful hour and the awful act, prepares to launch forth and

shoot the gulf to the eternal world. He redoubles prayer. He concentrates his last remaining powers upon eternal things.

But how different now the fate of the wise and the foolish virgins, of the true and the false professor, of him who has the true and the exhaustless grace in the soul and the formal religionist! The former, though taken by surprise and though startled for a brief hour by the high and resistless summons, speedily recovers from his slumber, awakes to righteousness, renews his strength, and—is ready to go. Cheerfully he bids adieu to earth, for he is going to heaven; cheerfully leaves his possessions, honors and pleasures, for these never were his hope or his idol; his hopes, treasures and joys being all laid up in heaven; cheerfully lays his body down and breathes his spirit forth, for he knows that if his earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, he has a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; cheerfully leaves the loved and sacred circles of friends and of home, for he goes to God his Father, Christ his Savior, an innumerable company of angels and to the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven. He knows whom he has believed. Death has been unstinged, the grave has been conquered. Doubts and fears vanish. Assurance fills the heart. Transport snatches the spirit away. On the edge of glory and fluttering to be gone, he thus communes:

> Vital spark of heavenly flame,
> Quit, O quit this mortal frame,
> Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying;
> Oh! the pain, the bliss of dying.

Cease, fond nature, cease thy strife,
And let me languish into life.
Hark! they whisper, angels say,
Sister spirit, come away.
What is this absorbs me quite,
Steals my senses, shuts my sight,
Drowns my spirit, draws my breath?
Tell me, my soul, can this be death?
The world recedes, it disappears,
Heaven opens on my eyes, my ears
With sounds seraphic ring.
Lend, lend your wings, I mount, I fly!
Oh grave, where is thy victory?
Oh death, where is thy sting?"*

Thus dies the former; but not so the latter, not so the foolish virgins. Dies the merely nominal professor, as the fool dieth, and his hope perishes as the spider's web. Ah! outward profession and formal duties avail not now. "His lamp is going out." His empty forms of legal and self-righteous worship are about to perish forever. Oh, what a preacher art thou, O death! The man who could never be brought truly to see and to feel his guilty, lost and miserable estate, and his infinite need of the justifying righteousness and the sanctifying grace of God, sees and feels it now. The man who could never be persuaded of his need of an inward renovation and of an all-pervading life of God in his soul, is persuaded now. He becomes anxious and alarmed. He looks around him and bestirs himself in good earnest now to do the work he should have done before. Now is the time for dying, not repenting. It is the time for going forth with a bound, a

* Pope.

song and a shout to meet the bridegroom; not a time to prepare for his coming. It is the time now to use the oil, not to get it!

And yet, alas! how many put off this great and necessary work of preparing—seriously and thoroughly preparing, until the dying hour! How often are the bodily pains of the dying bed surpassed by soul darkness and agonies! How many are there, even among professors, who can not be stirred up to a serious and thorough performance of this work until death turns preacher and thunders in their ears! And then what amazement, what inward trembling, what soul anxiety and anguish! What eager diligence and care!

"*And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.*" How often is this realized in every-day life. How often does the mere moralist or formalist, when at death's door he comes to see himself as he is, send for the minister and for Christians, and seek their counsel and their prayers, who never did so before; and how ofen is it all in vain? How often does all hope perish before the bodies die? How often is the wretched ghost borne from its gasping body in the winding-sheet of blank despair? The Lord of that servant has come at a time when he looked not for him, and at an hour of which he was not aware, and appoints him his portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. In vain do pastors and Christian friends watch and pray around him. For although the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, yet it can not avail to effect an impossi-

bility, and it is impossible to recall the day of grace when that day is past and gone forever. It is vain to point to Jesus, in vain to seek mercy. It is too late. The Bridegroom has come and the door is shut. Not that there are no death-bed conversions. They are, however, very few—few among any class and fewest of all among hypocritical professors of religion, who have deceitfully trifled all their lives with God, with the Church, and with themselves, and whose condition and final destiny seemed to be declared in Matthew xxiv. 48–51 and Proverbs i. 24–31.

CONCLUSION.

Let us then be ready; let us have our loins girt and our lamps burning; let us every day live as if it were our last day; let us spend every hour and moment as if we had not another to spend; let us not allow death to surprise us slumbering and sleeping. Oh! how dreadful the condition when that stern messenger coming finds us immersed in earthly pursuits and cares—unready and unwilling to go. What would the drunkard and the harlot and the Sabbath-breaker and the covetous person and the proud and the envious and the whisperer and the backbiter give then, to recall their wasted time and their slighted privileges. Oh, how little will time and all its concernments look, when, standing upon its confines and looking out upon the shoreless future, we compare them with the grand, awful, boundless prospects of that eternity, which then shall spread itself out in overwhelming magnitude before us. O careless hearer and careless pro-

fessor, awake from this sleep of death—burst away from this deep, this damning infatuation which benumbs and stupefies you. Let your loins be girt and your lamps be burning. Let your vessels be replenished with oil. What meanest thou, O sleeper? My friends in addressing you I am overwhelmed with the magnitude of the interests at stake. I am overpowered and borne down with a sense of the issues of this day's work. Is it not so (God grant I may be mistaken), but is it not even so that in addressing myself to this great congregation of virgins—of professors of religion, that I am addressing a congregation, every individual of which is slumbering and sleeping, and many of them also without oil in their vessels? Let us test the matter. Let us try whether this is the alarming condition of many of those—of *all* of those who are now before me. Are not you, O man, are not you, O woman, slumbering and sleeping? Are you in that frame of mind in which you would be were you certain that so soon as you leave the throne of grace, around which you are now assembled in quiet and solemn posture, you would be summoned by the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him?" Is it indeed so that ever since the last Sabbath day you have so lived through all the week as you would have lived had an angel assured you that *to-night* you must die? Nay, my brethren, had one of those good and happy spirits, who minister to the heirs of salvation, assured you on this day week by-gone, that on this night the midnight cry of our text should

ring its alluring or its alarming accents upon your ears, would not your deportment during the intervening period have been very different from what it really has been? Would the grave and great thoughts of life, death, judgment, eternity, heaven and hell been as seldom in your hearts? Would the work of self-examination have been so superficial, or the voice of prayer so dull? Would the things of earth have engaged so much of your time or your affections, of your anxieties, your hopes or your fears? Nay, my flock, you are living in the continual neglect of duty. You are continually hazarding your precious souls. You are sleeping upon the brink of the yawning precipice. You have not your loins girt and your lamps burning and all things ready for starting at a moment's warning across that dark, deep gulf of difficult and dangerous passage, which you must perhaps try to-night.

Oh! how many among you will in all probability shortly raise the sad cry that the lamp of your religion is "going out," and that you are about to be left in total and in endless darkness. Oh! how sad when in the moment of death—that time of need—when all other things having been taken from you, joy and hope and high expectancy are taken too. How dreary that soul who has been roused by the midnight cry from its midnight slumber, only to awake amidst flame and midnight darkness. How great the blasting of all your hopes, when the skinny hand of death pushes you away from your prayers and your property, your petitions

and your pursuits, your sermons and your sordidness, your sacraments and your indulged passions. How sore the surprise when you find that suddenly you have lost the one and that the other avails you not, because that you have never had the love of God or godliness, of Christ or Christianity, abiding in you. Poor, self-deluded mortal, does not your conscience reveal to you ere this the treachery of that, above all things, deceitful and desperately wicked heart of yours? Do you not plainly see that if you had the oil of regenerating and sanctifying grace to feed the lamp of your religious profession, that it would be otherwise—that instead of that odd and infernal medley of the things of God and of the things of mammon, of which we have just spoken, we would have found you in a different posture—old things passed away and all things new? Be admonished then by the solemnly instructive fate of the virgins. Awaken out of sleep and put on the armor of the light and of the day. Take the whole armor of God that ye may stand against the evil day and having done all, to stand. For we war not a trifling warfare, but we fight with principalities and against power, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places—and we fight for heaven. Be up then in a moment and be ever on the alert, because your adversary, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour, and because the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

## SERMON XVII.

## The Parable of the Good Samaritan.

LUKE X. 30–37.

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This parable was designed to teach us kindness or benevolence toward our neighbor. The circumstances connected with its deliverance are stated in the context. Verses 25–29. It had already been admitted that we are required to love our neighbor as ourselves. And the parable is designed to explain and enforce this idea. This is all. To explain (as some have done) this parable to mean the fall of men in Adam and their recovery through Christ is utterly without foundation.

Attention to historical circumstances will cast much light upon the meaning and beauty of this parable.

1. It would seem from the parable that the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was one much frequented. This we know to be a fact. It was the road which led to Peræa as well as to Jericho, and hence its

publicity. But at Jericho there were stations or classes of priests and Levites, and these would be of course frequently going up to Jerusalem, to engage in religious services, after the performance of which they would return to their homes. Hence the propriety of the mention of both a priest and a Levite in the parable.

2. Another historical circumstance to be noted is the dangerousness of that road. It lay through a desert country and in the vicinity of mountains inhabited only by banditti, who attacked passing travelers. The propriety of the imagery of the parable is very manifest.

3. It remains to mention a third circumstance in the history of the times in order to illustrate completely the propriety, force and beauty of the whole imagery. I allude to the alienation and enmity which existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. John iv. 9.

The sum of the matter is this: the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a very public one—one along which priests and Levites were very frequently passing—withal it was a very dangerous road—and the Jews and Samaritans were violent and hereditary enemies. Now the Savior makes use of these circumstances to illustrate and enforce the lesson of universal and active benevolence. The Samaritan, a hereditary enemy of the Jewish race, is represented as laying aside the remembrance of this national antipathy, and notwithstanding the fact that it was a Jew who lay wounded and half-dead before him—notwithstanding that he was on a journey in which

it was annoying to be delayed—notwithstanding he was in great jeopardy himself by delaying along that dangerous way—yet the calls of humanity, of universal philanthropy, were louder and more forceful than all these pleadings of selfishness, and "he had compassion on him and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him" (through the night), "and on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence" (all the money he could spare from his own present necessities), "and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." Upon this conduct we have the following dialogue: "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said" (the lawyer, previously mentioned), "He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise." Go, and as opportunity offers, and especially as need requires, perform these labors of love, not merely to your family and your friends and your acquaintances and your countrymen, but even to strangers who are far away, and to enemies; and do this even at the sacrifice of your own possessions, and if need requires it, even although you should thereby much interrupt your own plans and greatly endanger your own life.

Upon this parable I found the following remarks:

1. We are to reckon all men, even our enemies, as our brothers and to love them as such. No mat-

ter how remote their place, or how obscure their situation, or how rude and barbarous their character. No matter for country, or climate or color. No matter whether they are kind or unkind, peaceful or warlike, we are to love all; and to love them as ourselves. Matthew v. 43–47. Luke vi. 32–36. Nor do the Scriptures enjoin a morality so high as to be unattainable. Romans xii. 14–21.*

In this does the morality of our holy religion differ from that of every other upon the face of the earth. Other religions will teach their devotees to love those who are brother devotees, while they too often, like those of Mecca and of Rome, put the sword into the hands of men against all those of a different creed. Always do they teach the duty of looking upon all others with an eye of alienation and dislike. This is one of the particulars in which the Bible morality manifests itself to be of God. All men are to be loved and cherished. All men are brothers. God hath made of one blood all nations for to dwell on all the face of the earth.†

2. This love to strangers and enemies, to all men existing upon the earth, is not an affection which may be locked up in our bosoms and kept down in the torpor of dormant inactivity, but it is one which is to be called into vigorous and constant exercise. It should give shape and object and character to all our plans and pursuits. We must not only love all men in our hearts and with all our hearts, but we must manifest that love in our whole lives and by the constant tenor of our every-day actions. Indeed

* See Chalmers in loco. † Acts xvii. 26.

the benevolence of performance must and will be found to correspond with the benevolence of feeling. Just in proportion as the heaven-infused principles of philanthropy find place in the soul, just in that proportion will acts of beneficence thicken and brighten along our pathway. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh and the hand worketh. It will be among the necessary and unavoidable sequences of things, that as when the tree is good, the fruit will be good; so when the heart is kind, the eye will be kind; and, when the feelings are loving, the actions will be loving. The physical necessity is not greater that the stream should be as the fountain, than is the moral necessity that the life should be as the heart. These are truths which commend themselves to every man's conscience. When we see a man always quarreling and fighting, the conclusion invariably is that he has a selfish and quarrelsome disposition. If we see a man always engaged in philosophy, poetry, music, or painting, we say that he has a taste and love for that branch of science or art which he thus pursues. Not only ought we to see that our beneficence follows our benevolence, and that kind and good actions follow kind and good feelings, but also that in the nature of things this must be so—that it can not be otherwise. These teachings of enlightened reason correspond to the infallible word and law of God. When we turn to them we find them inculcating with the greatest possible earnestness and authority the same salutary lesson. We hear them declaring that the love of the heart is to be manifested in the

charities of the life; and that he in whom these things are not found is not and can not be a Christian. 1 John iii. 17, 18. Romans xii. 9–20. James ii. 15, 16. 1 Peter i. 22.

It is not merely in obedience to the authority of God that we urge the duty inculcated in our parable. Our duty to man—morality as well as piety—urges that we "do to others as we would have others do unto us." And it is both upon the one and the other of these grounds that we urge upon the Church the duty of engaging in works of beneficent charity. It is on both these principles that we urge the duty of sustaining the benevolent and evangelical institutions now in operation. We must act the part of the good Samaritan on an extensive theater. We must do to all men as we would that they should in like circumstances do unto us. Not to do so is a breach both of piety and morality—a violation of both the first and second tables of the law—an infraction of our obligations both to God and man. Now, I put it to you, whether it is consistent with loving our neighbor as ourselves to withhold from them the means either of present or of future good, when we have them at our disposal? What would you wish to be done to you were you destitute of the gospel and of the means of grace? Were the Chinese or the Hindus, or any portion of the Mohammedan or Pagan world to exchange places with you; had they your light and privileges, your everlasting consolation and good hopes through grace; and had you their darkness and ignorance; were you fanatical devotees like them, and were you subject to their

miserable life and their terrible death—what would you wish them to do? Would you be willing that they should be as tardy in reaching out the helping hand toward you as you are now in reaching out the helping hand toward them? Can you—you who believe the Bible and the gospel—who are assured that there is a heaven and a hell—who know that where no vision is the people perish—can you say that you are willing, *mutatis, mutandis*,* that they should spend ten, twenty, forty, one hundred, one thousand, ten thousand dollars, as Christians are now doing, on gauze and lace and head-dresses and gold rings and goodly apparel—on pomp and equipage and feast and show, while you were, under their very eyes and in their hearing, going down with groans to the gloomy prison-house of everlasting despair? What must be the opinion of the twenty thousand heathen who have died to-day, and who are now doomed to be miserable and everlasting outcasts? If it is given to them to see and know the affairs of this upper world, and could their cindered eye-balls contemplate the conduct of the professors of this age—what must they think, what can they say? Lay your ear close to hell-gate, and you will hear, mid mingled wails and curses, from twenty thousand thousand of human beings, such words as these: "They knew that this year we must die. They knew that this year we must go to make our bed in the everlasting burnings. They knew that the Messiah had enjoined them to preach the gospel to every creature. But

* The necessary changes being made.—ED.

to them it mattered not; their abominable lusts must be satisfied. They knew that in one year twenty thousand thousand of Pagans must be lost—must begin to burn and to burn forever. But to them it mattered not. Their persons must be finely clad, their morbid appetites pampered, their estates enlarged and ornamented. And yet they are Christians, at least on Sunday!" Again, I ask, are we doing to them as we would wish them under similar circumstances to do to us? Are we loving our neighbor as ourselves, while we act in this way?

Nay, my brothers, nay, let us rather remember the example of Christ, who for our sakes became poor. Like him, let us divest ourselves of selfish and sensual aims and efforts, and devote ourselves entirely to the cause of God. Christ hath left us in these things an example that we should follow in his steps. Let us contemplate that example long and well; even until we are changed into the same image of benevolence and beneficience by which his career of humiliation was characterized. Let us go about doing good. With a heart overflowing with kindness for all men, and in obedience to the spontaneous promptings of inward affection, let us endeavor to dispel the ignorance, and chase away the fears, and soothe the sorrows, and dry up the tears of the sin-stricken world in which we live. Let no country, however remote, be outside of the range of our kind affections—let no clime, however distant, be beyond the reach of our charitable activities. Let us not think it hard, when, in addition to the evangelical institutions of our age, we are called upon to

support asylums, hospitals, schools, and other institutions, which, though charitable, are merely secular in their character.

3. I think the spirit of our parable looks with an eye of the severest reprehension upon all the iniquitous and oppressive and cruel institutions and practices with which our wicked world so unhappily abounds. "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*" Is this a sound and a scriptural sentiment? Is it the moral of our text—the truth illustrated by our parable? Does it inculcate a duty binding upon all men? Upon every station and rank in life? Does it even reach to our treatment of enemies? Then methinks that most of those wars, which now create so much eclat and fill the world with carnage and blood, are condemned by the conduct of the good Samaritan. Most of them, when weighed in the even-poised balances of the sanctuary, will be found wanting. Strip war of its gaudy pomp and parade, and naught remains but toil, and suffering, and slaughter, and blood. "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*" Is this the sentence of Him who spake as never man spake—of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords—of Him to whom we must all give an account at last of all the deeds done in the body. Then methinks that slavery,* without fault on the part of its victims, is as wide from the Scripture morality as the zenith from the nadir. Hear, ye who use your neighbor's service without wages, and give him not for his work—ye, against whom the cry of the laborers who have reaped down your

* This sermon was prepared in 1847.—Ed.

fields, and whose wages are kept back by you by force and fraud, ascendeth to heaven—ye, who build your houses by oppression and your chambers by wrong, if there be any faint embers yet alive to moral right in the whole region of your sophisticated conscience — hear the Master's sentence: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," and "Cast away the iron rod and the hand-cuff; break every yoke and let the oppressed go free." Hear this heaven-inspired injunction, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*," and be ashamed of false, forged Bible pleas for robbery and wrong. Does that man love his neighbor as himself who binds and chains him; who rends asunder the wife and her husband, the child and its parent, the sister from her brother; who lays his unhallowed hand not only upon his liberty, and his hard-earned wages, and upon every endearing and holy tie of earthly relationship, but who, with an effrontery that hell should be ashamed of, lays his hand upon the soul also and binds it down in ignorance and crime, to end in everlasting death? Does this man of most enormous outrage love his neighbor as himself? Does he do all this from pure benevolence? Does pure love to his neighbor prompt him to lay his hand upon this man's person and possessions, and take them all away? Is it the ever-active spirit of Christian charity that impels him to force his helpless, writhing victims to labor from dawn till dark, from youth till death, at the end of the lash, for a pitiful pittance of clothing and food, whilst the very amiable and disinterested master riots and revels on the handsome proceeds of this Bible

benevolence? Does he deprive him of moral and intellectual elevation and enjoyment—does he keep Bibles and books from him by legislative enactment, and train him for crime and condemnation—and all this just because he loves his neighbor as himself? It is one among the strangest and most incomprehensible of things, that it should have ever entered the mind of any human being, much more of persons professing godliness, that the slavery of unoffending persons, even in its mildest form, is consistent with that love which ought to have place in the bosoms of all God's intelligent creatures. It is not loving our neighbor as ourselves; it is not laying down our lives for the brethren; it is not doing God's will on earth as it is done in heaven—for in heaven there is no slavery of unoffending beings, no lash, no hand-cuffs, no tears, no groans, and no blood. The holding of our unoffending fellow-men is not doing to others as we would desire them to do unto us.*

I think also that the spirit of the parable has been entirely lost sight of by those who persecute others for conscience sake. This is not to love our neighbor as ourselves. While we wish to be allowed the peaceable possession of our own views, we ought not to inflict pains and penalties upon others for theirs. And besides, racks, and prisons, and gibbets, and fires, and fines, and banishments, are not the arguments best calculated to explain and confirm

* If any Southern reader feels aggrieved by this condemnation of slavery and slave-holding, it may be well for him to read what is said in the second sermon on the parable of *The Pounds*, in regard to oppression and injustice in the North. (P. 518).—ED.

the teachings of truth, and to recommend them to the understandings and affections of men. Pain and privation may address themselves to our fears, but they can not give light to the understanding. They can not convince it of the truth or value of a single proposition. To uphold and to propagate our holy religion, something very different from these is required, and something very different from them has been furnished by the great Captain of our salvation. The Christian's armor, both of defense and offense, is a spiritual one. His feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; his loins are girt with the girdle of truth; righteousness is his breastplate; faith his shield; salvation his helmet; and his sword is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. True is the declaration that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds.*

4. We have in this parable part of the argument by which we vindicate the divine morality of the Bible. This viewed merely as a code of morals is manifestly of divine origin. There is such superhuman purity and perfection, such clearness and comprehensiveness in its principles, as to convince every unprejudiced examiner that man did not and could not devise it. Universal benevolence and beneficence are things so lovely as to engage the admiration and affections of the whole human family. But where will you find these duties inculcated beyond the range of revelation? Nowhere. It has, indeed, been considered a defect in the Biblical sys-

* Ephesians vi. 14–17. 2 Corinthians x. 4.

tem of ethics that patriotism is nowhere mentioned in it as a virtue. But truth refutes the idea that patriotism, as distinguished from cosmopolitanism, is a virtue. So to love our country as that we will seek its aggrandizement at the expense of right, of justice, of kindness to others, is not a sound morality. The Bible enjoins the only virtuous patriotism. It requires us to love the entire world and seek its good with all earnestness and pains-taking, and to love the place where we were born or where we live, and to seek its good as forming a part of that world. But to seek its happiness at the expense of other places is a thing which the Bible neither requires nor tolerates, and in this, as in other particulars in which its morality differs from the variant systems of uninspired ethics, its infinite superiority exhibits unmistakable traces of its divine origin. It is the glory of the Bible that it breaks down the barriers which would limit our affections and our well-doing to self or to party, and teaches us that all the families of mankind, as being of one blood and brotherhood, should have our sympathies and services. And when men shall have become able to appreciate the moral sublimity of these teachings, then shall selfishness and party spirit and contention and war become things of the past. When every man shall say and feel, "I am a citizen of the world, a brother of the race," then shall war and wrong and robbery cease, and peace and righteousness shall universally prevail. "Thou, glorious era, come."

## SERMON XVIII.

## The Parable of the Rich Fool.

LUKE XII. 13–21.

1. We learn from the context that the Savior was interrupted in the midst of a discourse, the aim of which was to persuade his hearers to trust in the wisdom, power and goodness of God. He was teaching them that their Father in heaven is God over all; that he makes all things work for good to them that love him, and that all his children may, in calm confidence, give themselves up to the discharge of present duty without anxious thoughts about the future.

In the midst of these consolatory assurances he was interrupted. One of the company had so little interest in these things, cared so little about the great salvation and the great God of salvation, and had his heart and soul so filled with the ephemeral interests of earth, as to interrupt the Savior's precious discourse with the unreasonable request, "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me."

2. It was not wrong indeed for him to claim his own just and legal share of the paternal estate, for it is probable that his claim was a just one, since he

appealed publicly to the great Master. Nor was it wrong in a disputed case to seek a settlement by arbitration, for this mode of terminating such difficulties is better than litigation, and is recommended in the New Testament.* Nor yet was it wrong to refer the case to the wisest and best of men for adjudication. But the wrong consisted in this: that in the hearing of a discourse about the greatest and grandest of things, the complainant was concerned only about earthly things, and was willing to mar all, if he could but secure the comparatively contemptible trifles on which his heart was set. It was as much as to say, "I have no time to care about my soul; I care nothing about the great God and the proffers you are making in his name; I want none of his care or favor or friendship or saving power; I care nothing about the treasure eternal in the heavens. Away with it all, until some convenient opportunity. For the present, I want only the portion of goods that falleth to me. Nor yet do I care for the harm I may do to others by the interruption of this heavenly discourse. These wandering souls whom you are trying to lead back to God may wander on forever. This world, that you are trying to enlighten, may wander on in eternal darkness for aught that I care. But I have one great weight pressing on my heart; there is one great concern—at least great to me—one that corrodes my thoughts and cankers my hours. It is my inheritance."

Do you not see that the man's heart had wholly turned away from God and heaven? that this little

*1 Cor. vi. 1-6.

earth and this fleeting life had engrossed and swallowed him up? Is it not evident that he worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, and that he was looking to the world as the chief good and portion of his soul? This was the rock upon which he was running his soul to dash it into irremediable ruin. He had made gold his confidence. He was seeking nothing else, hoping for nothing else, desiring nothing else.

3. The blessed Savior, as he always did, refused to be an arbiter in such a case. He came not into the world to reform society, but to regenerate it; not to remodel human institutions, but to remodel human souls; not to regulate the course of civil events, but to regulate the course and current of human thoughts and affections. Accordingly he replied, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Verse 14.) As in this, so did the Savior in all other instances. Often did the Jews, as in the case of the woman taken in adultery and in that of paying taxes to Cæsar, try to insnare the Savior into an interference with civil affairs, but always without success. Had the Christian pastors followed his example—an example from which they began to depart so early as the second century—it had been well for the world. For whatever advantages of a temporary kind may have resulted to men by that interference in purely civil affairs so extensively practiced by the bishops, at and after the fall of the Roman empire, even down to our own times, still the disadvantages have been many and ruinous. It has, in my judgment, done more to corrupt the

Church, more to waste and weaken the power of religion, more to block the wheels of the bright chariot of the gospel, more to delay the rising dawn of the world's redemption, than any other one influence whatever. The Savior's consistent and persistent example of refusing to intermeddle with the framework of civil society and the forms and facts of civil administration is entirely unique, and is at variance with the course of all self-sent reformers that have figured their little day in the history of the world. Every one of them has sought to reform the world by commencing without the man, instead of within, and by endeavoring to reform his outward circumstances, instead of enlightening and directing his conscience. And miserable reformers were they all. As well might they purify the stream without first purifying the fountain, or endeavor to make the fruit good without making the tree good. For what is human history, human institutions and human laws, but the acts and out-goings of human nature? Then make human nature good and history will be good. Sanctify human souls and human society, human laws and human institutions will be sanctified.

4. But to return whence we have wandered. Although our Savior would not act as a civil arbiter, he stops to give the young man a solemn and awful warning against the besetting sin of worldliness and covetousness, which had blinded the eyes of his soul and were leading him away from God.

"Take heed and beware of covetousness." (Verse 15.) Notice: it is covetousness (*Gr. pleonexia*), not

unrighteousness (*Gr. adikia*), against which the warning is given. For the young man had not been guilty of any unrighteousness or injustice in merely desiring an equitable division of the estate. But he was guilty of setting his mind and heart upon it in such a way as showed that the world was his god. Like the prodigal, he had turned away from the great God of light and life and joy—from the great, infinite, uncreated, ineffable good of the human soul, and was now feeding on husks.

But what is covetousness? The word literally means "the desire of having more," and the force of the passage is to enjoin us "exceedingly to beware of the desire of having more." Not that the desire for money or property is wrong in itself. If we desire to have them as the means of doing good, the desire may be innocent and laudable. The desire to have wealth wherewith to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, relieve the sick, supply widows and orphans, to erect hospitals and asylums and schools and colleges and churches, to sustain the gospel and disseminate the Christian religion—to desire money, learning, eloquence or power for these and similar uses, I can not think to be sinful. It is but doing as Paul enjoins—"coveting earnestly the best gifts." No; such desires are not sinful. They are not "covetousness." Covetousness is the desire of money for the sake of owning it, for the importance it gives, or the power it confers, or the pleasure or splendor it procures. The desire of wealth for these uses is simple, because then you are looking to it instead of unto God for your security and your hap-

piness. You trust in the gift instead of the Giver, and worship the creature instead of the Creator.

5. But to the warning against covetousness the Savior annexes this weighty reason: "For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." The word here translated life refers to that spiritual, immortal principle within us, which we usually call the soul or spirit. It is used about one hundred and thirty-two times in the New Testament, and almost invariably has such a meaning. And the thing affirmed is that the chief good of a man does not consist in worldly things. The man was reminded that he had a soul; that he was God-like in his nature; that earthly things, honors, possessions and enjoyments are for our earthly and perishable part; but, that the soul—the immortal and celestial nature within us, as it is our principal part, our God-like manhood, which alone distinguishes us from the beasts that perish—should be our chief concern. He was reminded that these things can not prolong our lives here, nor secure happiness for us hereafter. He was reminded that true spiritual soul-joy, as distinguished from that which is merely animal and sensuous, does not come from without a man, but from within—not from his circumstances, but his character.

6. The warning is emphatic: "*Take heed and beware.*" You must guard against this covetousness with great care and caution, else it will grow upon you. It will grow by what it feeds on. It will increase with increasing fortune. It will enlarge itself as death and the grave, and never be satisfied. It

will finally eat out all piety, and turn the soul utterly away from God. It will stifle benevolence, and dry up every noble and generous impulse, transforming the soul into a moral desert. It will wear you out with care and toil, and then leave you to eternal poverty and want.

But as if all this were not a sufficient warning against covetousness, the Savior introduces the parable of *The Rich Fool* to enforce it.

1. We remark first that the mere possession of wealth was not the sin of this rich fool. Simply to own and manage in a lawful way the good things which the God of providence bestows, is not a sin, but a duty.

2. Nor did his sin and folly consist in the manner in which he acquired his wealth. It is not charged that he was unjust or oppressive in his dealings. He is not impeached as a thief, or robber, or sharper, or extortioner. It is not said that he wronged widows and orphans, or kept back the wages of his hirelings. He had large and rich grounds, which, under skillful cultivation, brought forth abundantly. In all this there appears nothing but what is fair, just and honorable.

3. His sin and folly consisted in setting his heart and hopes on wealth. He aimed no higher than to acquire and enjoy it. He spent his life in "heaping together treasures for himself, and was not rich toward God." He lived to himself and for himself, recognizing no obligation either to God or man. He lived as if there were no God, no soul, no eternity; as if present wealth, and pleasure, and splendor,

were the chief good; as if there were nothing else to care for. His prosperity only aggravated his greed. He went about to *pull down his barns and build greater.* He would heap together treasures like the sand of the sea. His prosperity thus ensnared him into a deeper covetousness. Long before, it had been said, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase."* Long before, men had been admonished not to set their hearts on wealth when their gain was increased. But all this had no effect with him; his covetousness increased with his wealth.

4. His soul got completely broken loose from God. His vision was bounded by earth. He said, *What shall I do?* Had he been a good man, he would have said, "These fields, and fruits, and flocks, and folds are God's; I will employ them in his cause and for his glory. I am but God's steward. I will feed the hungry and clothe the naked; I will bid schools rise for the education of the young, asylums for the unfortunate, and hospitals for the sick; so far as my means can aid them, science and the arts shall flourish; the leaves of the blessed Bible, scattered on the wings of the wind, shall fall fair and fast like snowflakes, around every habitation; the foaming prow of the missionary ship shall cut and curl the glassy waves of all the seas, as it bears self-denying and self-expatriated missionaries with the light of the gospel, far hence to lands darkened with the shadow of death; churches, with sky-kissing spires shall rise at home, and the joyful sound of the gospel shall

* Ecclesiastes v. 10.

be heard in every town and village and neighborhood." I say, had he been a good man, one who had Jesus Christ formed in his heart, thus would he have spoken and acted. Had he been in heart like the Savior, he would in life been like the Savior—like him who came from heaven to earth, and gave himself to toil and agony, that God might be glorified and heaven filled with ransomed souls. He would have regarded his toil and tillage as means wherewith to achieve these glorious ends.

6. But not thus did the *rich fool decide.* Note his form of expression: "*My* fruits," "*my* goods," "*my* barns," and "*my* soul." (Vs. 18, 19.) All is *his*, and he is his own. Who is lord over him? He is his own master and the master of his property; he is an independent sovereign, isolated from God and the Church, from his country and his race, and he will live as he lists.

7. Observe the end he has in view in all his plans and labors: "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." (V. 19.) What a finished picture of many modern church-members have we here! The man intends, after getting abundance of wealth, to retire from business and enjoy it. He will close up his concerns, remove from the bustle of business, and retire to some magnificent country-seat. Visions of splendid mansions and lovely lawns, with their trees, and streams, and walks, and lakes, and flowers, and fruits, are dancing before him. Dreams of a green and honored old age, of a long, lingering, lovely evening after his hot

and hurried day of toil, are floating up and down in his imagination.

Poor, misguided man! He had no right thus to live to himself and for himself; and he had no right to retire from business as long as his capacity for it remained. He was placed here to watch and work and pray for himself and his race, and to advance the kingdom of God in our world. He was intrusted with ten talents by his Lord, and received the charge, "Occupy till I come;" and he had no right to employ all those talents in his own behalf, instead of for his Master; and still less had he a right, after having gained all that he wanted, to wrap his talents in a napkin and bury them in the earth. No! no! unless incapacitated for business, you are not at liberty, in God's sight, to retire from it. If, indifferent to the miseries of mankind, you first use all your time and talents in providing for yourselves, and then, having done this, you retire from business to eat, drink, and be merry in some splendid country-seat, I tell you the fate of the rich fool will be yours. The curse of God will follow you into your place of retirement and ease. It will break out like a fretting leprosy in the walls of your splendid villa. It will rest like a black blight and mildew upon your sloping, nicely rounded lawns. It will spread like an incurable murrain among your herds. It will canker your gold and silver, and eat up your garments like a moth. The bitter curse of Meroz will come upon you, because you "came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." I have observed that men of real piety, who are so

misled, are generally stripped of their property before they die; and as for those who are not pious, some are so tortured as to rush back into the city to drown their thoughts in a deluge of business; and others, unable longer to endure their miseries, hasten their own death. The largest proportional number of suicides are among those rich fools who, attempting to satsify their souls with an earthly portion, have retired from business "to eat, drink, and be merry."

Nay, my hearers, if you would be satisfied with long life, and see good days here, and be fitted for the divine splendors of a celestial habitation hereafter, lead the life of faith, and toil, and self-denial, and self-sacrifice. Live for God and Christ and the eternal future; live for the Church, your country and your race. So live that the world shall be the better, and not the worse, that you have lived in it. Let your path be as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

> "So live that when thy summons comes to join
> The innumerable caravan that moves
> To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
> His chamber in the silent halls of death;
> Then go not, like the quarry slave at night,
> Scourged to his dungeon; but sustained and soothed
> By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
> Like one that draws the drapery of his couch
> About him, and lays him down to pleasant dreams."

But if ye will not take heed and beware of covetousness; if ye will still persist in living without God and without hope in the world; if ye will still isolate yourselves from God and from man, and live to your-

self and for yourself; if ye will still go on in sin, dead to all that is noble and God-like in your nature; if ye will still play the part of this rich fool, then your fate shall be such as is described in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Job: "In the fullness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits: every hand of the wicked shall be upon him. All darkness shall be hid in his secret places: a fire not blown shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him. The increase of his house shall depart and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed him by God."

## SERMON XIX.

# The Parable of the Barren Fig-tree.

LUKE XIII. 6–9.

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The commentators almost universally suppose this parable has primary reference to the Jewish nation. But they do so without the slightest authority from the text; against the clearest declarations of the context, showing it to be spoken to and concerning individuals, not nations; and they give this interpretation as a pure *obiter dictum*, hardly one of them so much as pretending to assign a reason. That they have said so seems to be reason enough. That they are mistaken is shown by several considerations.

1. If the Jewish nation is the fig-tree, then the vineyard in which it is planted must be the world. But this is contrary to the uniform use of this figure in the Holy Scriptures. There is not a single example of such a use of it from Genesis to Revelations. A vineyard is with the Bible a favorite

symbol of the *Church*, but of the *world*, never, never. Genesis xlix. 11. Deuteronomy xxxii. 32. Psalm lxxx. 8–16. Isaiah v. 1–7; xxvii. 1–7. Jeremiah ii. 21. Ezekiel xv. 1–6; xix. 10. Hosea x. 1. Matthew xx. 1; xvi. 21; xxviii. 33–44. Mark xii. 1–12. Luke xx. 9–18. John xv. 1–5. In these and many other passages of the Old and New Testaments, the figure of a vine or vineyard is employed in the way we have mentioned. Now, it is strange indeed, if the figure is in this parable used in a sense so unusual, and without any intimation of its change of meaning either in the text or context.

2. That the parable was spoken *to* and concerning *individuals* is from the context as clear as sunshine. The circumstances were these: Jesus was teaching. A crowd of men were around him. He argued that men should repent and make up their peace with God betimes. "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison." Luke xii. 58. From what follows it seems that some of those standing by applied these warnings and exhortations, as hearers are apt to do, to others rather than themselves—to the Galileans whom Pilate murdered and to the eighteen who were killed by the falling of the tower of Siloam. (xiii. 1–5.) In accordance with the Sadducean doctrine, they held that men always receive their punishments in this life, and that great misfortunes argue great crimes. Hence they supposed that the

Savior's exhortations to repentance were applicable only to the greatest sinners.

But Jesus would not allow these hearers to escape so easily. He brings the matter home to their own bosoms and consciences, by the solemn and repeated declaration, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Now in all this he makes no mention of the Jewish nation, does not even allude to it. All that he said was addressed to the individual men and women before him.

3. The case of his hearers seems to have been this. They were Hebrews of pure blood, not Galileans of mixed blood. They had been regularly circumcised, and were strict observers of the outward rights and forms of their religion. Hence they thought that Christ's solemn warnings did not refer to them, but to the Galileans and other like men. They were self-righteous. They trusted in their Jewish blood and Jewish forms, and it never occurred to *them* that they were sinners, or that they were in danger of perdition, or that the Savior meant his discourse to apply to them. They trusted in their circumcision, as many men have since trusted in their baptism, to save them. They trusted also in their priests and sacrifices, in their temple and their liturgies and services, just as men are ever prone to do, and they thought when these were right all was right, and that they would be saved.

But Jesus preached that they were sinners both in heart and life, just like other men, and that they must repent or perish—be inwardly converted or be lost.

Always and everywhere men have been prone to trust to outward and ritualistic duties, and to neglect the inward renovation of the heart, the sanctification and purity of soul, that are requisite to the enjoyment of God's favor and communion with him. And as no people under heaven were ever more prone to these fatal errors than the Jews, and as the people whom Jesus was addressing had fallen into them, and were continuing in them, to their ruin, he set himself to convince and convert them. He plies their minds and consciences with the strange and unwelcome truth that unless they attained to that great, moral and spiritual change, which is expressed by the word *repentance*, they would inevitably perish. He taught them that though they were Jews of pure blood and though touching the ritual law blameless, yet they, just like other men, were wanderers from God and must return or be lost forever. He declared that they must not only observe the outward duties of their liturgy, but must serve God with a pure heart fervently; that in order to do so, they must be converted, born again, created anew—must *repent;* that they must abandon the broken cisterns of earth and return to God, the Living Fountain—must love, trust and worship him; and that without all this, notwithstanding their birth and blood, their privileges and services, they would certainly perish,

4. Our Savior next proceeded to assume in the parable that it was to bring about this *repentance* that their circumcision and their sanctuary, their ordinances and opportunities had been given them

of God. Their Church, with its prophets, priests and sacrifices, its altar, oracle and ordinances, was instituted, that by the blessing of divine grace upon the devout worshiper, he might be brought to repentance and recovered back to God. For this end did God make a covenant with Abraham, and renew it with Isaac, and confirm it with Jacob, even that he might have a seed, pure in heart, to serve him. For this end did he prepare a vineyard and plant it with figs and with the choicest vines, that it might bring forth to him the fruits of holiness—judgment, mercy and the fear of God. And now, unless the ecclesiastical people should issue in the holiness of the ecclesiastical people, it would fail to its end; and unless the people who enjoyed the benefit of these august and sacred institutions should improve them to their conversion and sanctification, they would be judged for their dereliction of duty, and would meet with a heavier wrath and sorer overthrow from God than the heathen who were less highly favored. All this and more is included and inculcated in the parable of the barren fig-tree—a parable which we now proceed to expound and apply.

1. "A certain man." This means God. He is the owner of the Church, and the Church is his vineyard. Psalm lxxx. 8–16. Isaiah v. 1–7. Jeremiah ii. 21. Ezekiel xv. 1–6. Matthew xxi. 33–43.

2. "Had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard." The Jews whom the Savior was addressing were such

fig-trees. Several points in this figure are worthy of a distinct consideration.

(1.) It was a *fig-tree* that was planted in the vineyard—not an oak of Bashan, nor a cedar of Lebanon, nor a fir-tree nor a pine—barren trees all of them. Had they been planted in the vineyard, though cultivated never so diligently, it had been foolish to expect them to bring forth fruit. But it was a *fig-tree*, one of the fruit-bearing kind, that was transplanted, and hence the expectation of fruit was reasonable.

(2.) Not old, but *young* trees are transplanted, and so this fig-tree was transplanted when young and tender, and while yet capable of being improved and invigorated by the diligent hand of culture.

(3.) Let it be further noted that though it was a fig-tree, a tree of the fruit-bearing kind, still it was not a bearer as yet. It was not transplanted because it was *now* fruitful, but that it might *become* fruitful.

How complete and beautiful the analogy between the course pursued toward the fig-tree by the lord of the vineyard and that pursued by the God of the Church toward the self-righteous and unconverted Jews, whom Jesus was addressing. They were fig-trees, trees of the fruit-bearing kind. They had sprung as scions from a sanctified stock. They were not children of the heathen, but of Abraham and the patriarchs and prophets. They were of a holy and a fruitful race, and therefore from them a life fruitful in holiness was to have been expected.

Like the fig-tree of the parable, they had been transplanted into the Church, the vineyard of God, at

an early age. They had been born into it, and were by birth heirs of its rich heritage of privileges and blessings. They had received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, and also of the promise that He who had been their fathers' God would also be theirs. They had been born, and had grown up and lived, in the Church of the living God. That they might become fruitful like fig-trees; that they might be holy, sanctified in their whole body, soul and spirit; that they might be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and be made righteous in the whole tenor of their lives; for these ends the Church was ordained, and for these ends they were born heirs of its glorious blessings. But to them all these things had been in vain. They remained unconverted and unfruitful, unrenewed in heart and life. With all their punctilious regard for the outward form and the ritual of religion, He who looketh on the heart knew them to be barren and dead, destitute alike of piety and charity. Hence with them the alternative was repentance or perdition.

3. "Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" It is thus Jesus convicts his Jewish auditors of their guilt and danger. Thus he demonstrates that something more is necessary to salvation than to be a Pharisee—something more than to have been born of believing parents, bred in the Church, and made a participant in its holy sacraments and services. But in this verse also there are

several things which call for distinct note and exposition.

(1.) The vine-dresser, who intercedes for the barren tree, must signify the Lord Jesus Christ, who is at the right of God and ever lives to make intercession for us. The world is spared at the intercession of Christ. Doubtless also fruitless members of the Church, and rebels against the gospel, are often spared at his intercession. We are as much indebted to his intercession as to his sacrifice of himself in our behalf. Fruitless hearer, think of this. It should sink down like lead into your heart. At the very time you are rejecting him on earth, crucifying him afresh, putting him to an open shame, and counting his blood of the covenant an unholy thing, he is in heaven, pleading with God to spare you, to wait longer, just a little longer, to see if you will not bear fruit. Alas! baptized youth of my charge, instructed but unconverted hearer, whoever you be, what iniquity have you found in this glorious and this gracious Jesus, that you will have none of him —that, rather than embrace the great salvation he so freely offers, you would rather encounter the tremendous hazards of a final banishment from heaven's glories, and a final destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power? But we proceed.

(2.) The command is, "cut it down." The lord of the vineyard would bear with this barren tree no longer. He had borne with it three years (if fig trees bear, they bear in that time), and now when all patience is exhausted, and all hope gone, he would

forbear no longer. He would away with the useless tree. With the ax of judgment he would fell it to the earth, and cast it into the fire to be burned. In this respect, too, the fig-tree represents the circumcised or baptized, but unfruitful members of the Church. It represents the Jews to whom the Savior was speaking. They had long been in his Church. From infancy they had been familiar with its divine laws and ordinances, its magnificent temple, its sacred priests, its gray-haired prophets, its consecrated offerings and its holy Shekinah. God's sun had shone upon this vineyard, and his rains and dews had watered it. He had visited and plied these men by his holy oracle, his Spirit, his ministers and his providences, and yet they remained unconverted, dead in trespasses and sins.

But now, at length, the time had come when his patience was exhausted. He would forbear no longer. He would be trifled with and mocked not another moment. He resolves to give them up, and that they shall find that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. His fury comes up into his face and the terrible sentence goes forth: "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Oh, my dear young friends, I beseech you to consider whether or not you are in danger of incurring this sentence. Turn, repent, before God shall forever forsake you. Give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from the all-devouring justice of the fiery law; "from thy adversary, lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee thou

shalt not come out thence till thou hast paid the very last mite."

4. But let us examine this sentence further. He gives reasons for it. First, the tree was useless; and, second, it was pernicious.

(1.) First, as we have already seen, it was a fruitless tree. The labor bestowed upon it was all in vain. Those whom it represents were barren of good. So far as any good result was concerned, it had been as well that they had never been planted in the vineyard, but had been born of unbelieving parents and lived among the heathen. They had grown up to maturity in the Church, and still bore no fruit, and the indications were that they never would. They were still unconverted sinners, and such they seemed likely to remain.

(2.) But, in the second place, they were not only useless in the Church, but positively *pernicious.* They *cumbered the ground;* they marred and damaged it; they occupied room which might else have been allotted to fruitful trees; their roots drank up nutritious juices, which had else gone to nourish the fruitful trees around them. Precisely such were those whom Jesus addressed. They were not only barren, but baleful. Ceasing to be fig, they became upas trees. Barren themselves, they blasted others. By their unworthy lives they brought a reproach upon religion. They became scandals and stumbling-blocks. Through them the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles. As with Eli's son's who wrought pollution and folly in Israel; as

with Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, so it was with them.

Thus it ever is that the worst enemies of pure and undefiled religion are unworthy, barren, dead professors. They are stumbling-blocks to their fellow-members. Their influence tends to chill and benumb all zeal and life. It operates as an extinguisher upon the piety that begins to be kindled in other bosoms. They spread coldness and inactivity in those around them. Nor does their influence cease, when, like a cold plague, it has leavened and poisoned their fellow-members. It spreads afar; it extends beyond the bounds of the Church; it causes the uninstructed, the irreligious and the profane to revile all that is holy, and to despise all that is good. If all communing church-members were what they ought to be, or even what they profess to be, the whole world would be converted to Christ in one generation.

5. We call your attention to another thought contained in this terrible sentence. There are holiness and justice in it, but there are love and mercy also. Yea, here mercy rejoices against judgment. Terrible as this sentence is, love devised and the sweet lips of mercy pronounced it. It is in mercy to others that God destroys barren professors. They are cut down and cast into the burnings, not merely because they are barren, but because they are positively injurious. They cumber the ground; they do injury to religion; they are an impediment to the Church, and a reproach to its name; they are a stumbling-block to the world. At all times, and in

every way, they are an offense and a curse. Hence even the love and mercy of God rise up and ask that they be cut down and removed. Awful condition for any man to be in, when even the divine mercy pleads for his destruction! Awful condition for a man, when even infinite love demands that, by the withdrawal of all restraining grace, he shall be given up to make an open and total shipwreck of conscience and character and hope, so that he may be utterly separated from the Zion of God, chased out of the world and shut up in darkness forever.

But still, as we behold and tremble, let us remember that it is *love* that pronounces the sentence of judgment and *love* that executes it—love to the Church and the world, and for the high and everlasting interests of the souls of men. This view of the subject we ought also to take when contemplating the penal fires in store for wicked men hereafter.

The judgments which have once and again swept over the world, destroying it by a deluge of waters, consuming its rank and reeking cities in tempests of fire, or sweeping its effete and corrupt monarchies as with the black besom of destruction, have all and ever been judgments of love. And when the great wheels of justice and judgment roll on from time out through eternity, and call forth the worm that never dies and the fires that ever burn, they are still the judgment wheels of love to the universe. "Zion heard and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O Lord. * * * Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap

their hands: let the hills be joyful together, before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world and the people with equity."* God's most righteous and terrible judgments are but judgments of love. The walls of Tophet, walls of fire though they be, are yet walls of omnipotent and immutable love, wherewith he engirdles all the meek and quiet ones that are in all the heavens, making them dwell in safety, shielded from the outrage and the wrong of the violent and wicked, who are imprisoned by them.

6. "And he answering said, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it." The vine-dresser, Jesus Christ, asks that it may be spared a little longer, until he shall make one more trial, if, peradventure, it may bring forth fruit. The divine mercy is reluctant to cut the sinner down, even when both justice and goodness unite and seem to demand the sacrifice. Renewed efforts in the providence of God are made for his conversion. Louder and more earnestly does Jesus knock at the door of his heart. The Spirit calls, and, perhaps, the conscience half awakens once more. Divine Providence comes near the man, and in a series of alluring or alarming incidents, awakens the soul to some degree of sensibility; and then the divine word read and preached flashes some last, lingering rays upon the heart. Heaven and earth, for one last, brief period, seem to conspire together, and with a thousand voices of alluring and alarming accents cry, "Repent or per-

* Psalm xcvii. 8; xcviii. 7-9.

ish; return to God or wander an outcast forever." This is the last effort.

7. "And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." It shall be spared no longer. The ax is already at the root of the tree, and it shall be cut down and cast into the devouring fire. If the sinner shall know and heed this in the day of his last, merciful visitation, well; but if not, let him look well to his goings—there is but a step between him and death. He shall cumber the ground no longer. He shall trifle with the divine patience no further. He shall be cut down. Restraining grace shall keep him back no longer from a life of open profligacy and disgrace and misery. Divine clemency shall no longer restrain the arrows of death from piercing him, and the fires of hell from pursuing him with their terrors. Henceforth he shall be hopeless forever and ever.

CONCLUSION.

And now, my hearers, need I spend much time in applying the pictured truths of this beautiful parable? Does not many a conscience here respond to them? Are there not in this church more than a few for whom this Scripture was written? Like the congregation to whom Jesus uttered this parable, you were all born in a Christian land, and many of you of Christian parents. Like them, you were by birth planted in the Church of God; and from little fig-trees you have grown years ago to the size and age of fruit-bearing. For many a day, on many a Sabbath, by a sermon, a providence, a pastor or a friend, the

great Master, who planted you as trees in his vineyard, has come, seeking fruit from you, and found none. Neither he, nor the world, nor the Church, nor you yourselves, have been the better for all the care and all the cost which have been expended on your salvation.

(1.) He has come to you by his word, seeking the fruit of piety. In early youth he called, "Son, daughter, give me thy heart." But you gave it to idols. Varying his voice, he said, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," but you put him far away. You gave yourselves to vanity, and God was not in all your thoughts. Time passed, years fled, seasons changed, suns rose and shone and set, moons waxed and waned; but there was no day nor hour in which the Bible and heaven-sent messengers did not cry aloud in his name, "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Thus, day by day, has he called, but you have closed your ear, like the deaf adder, that will not hear the voice of the charmer, though he were cunning, and could charm never so wisely.

(2.) Time and again has *God made conscience and his Holy Spirit* his messengers to ask you for his fruits in their seasons. But you have insulted his messengers, and sent them away empty. And now it may be conscience has ceased to warn and the Holy Spirit has ceased to strive, and you are left hopelessly dead in trespasses and sins.

(3.) God has sought your conversion through the instrumentality of friends and teachers. Pastors,

parents, brothers and sisters, friends and companions—many of them now silent in the grave—have, by conversation, by entreaty, by tears and by agonizing prayers, besought you to attend to the things which belong to your peace; and yet you remain in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, having no hope and without God in the world; and were you to die now and die as you now are, you would perish forever.

(4.) Unwilling to give you up, he has made the mighty hand of Providence second the efforts of friends and teachers, and the influence of the word, conscience and the Holy Spirit. He has sometimes warned you by death, by sickness, by accidents, and by the loss of friends. He gave you hair-breadth escapes from the fell destroyer, at the same time giving you space to repent, and to prepare for judgment and eternity; and yet each danger has only hardened you more and more, and made you more and more impenitent.

(5.) Universal nature seconds the efforts of all the others to make you happy. Day utters speech unto day, and night unto night showeth knowledge. The brook, the bird, the breeze, the wave, cry aloud of God. The summer and the winter, as they come and go, admonish you of your change. The fierce convulsions in the natural elements around you, with lungs of iron and voice of thunder, proclaim, "This is not your rest. Build not your house upon these shifting sands, but upon the Rock of Ages, where it may stand forever."

It is thus, my friends, that many of you have, by

God's sovereign grace, been born of pious parents, scions of the parent fig-tree—a tree long since transplanted to bloom in heaven. You were in early infancy, by baptism, planted in God's vineyard, the Church, and ever since you have been in every way cultivated and cared for. And now, remember that the great Master expects fruit. Shall he expect it in vain? Will you delay longer, and longer risk the terrible sentence, "Cut it down?"

But, remember, further, that the tree was not only *barren* but *bad*. It was not only useless, but *pernicious*. It not only did no good, it did harm. It cumbered the ground, drinking up its juices, shading its plants, and occupying room. Alas! oh, alas! so it is with many of you. Allow me to say so; for it is true, and you ought to consider it. Allow me this freedom, for God has burdened me with a fearful responsibility in respect to you, and if these be ungracious words, yet they proceed from a loving tongue. As an under vine-dresser, a laborer in the Lord's vineyard, I am charged to look after the fig-tree committed to my care. Allow me, then, impenitent hearers, to press upon you this consideration, that every barren tree cumbers the ground. Every unconverted man and woman among you not only does no good, but is doing harm, some more than others, but all doing more or less. All of you are standing in the way of the salvation of others around you. "He that is not for me" (says Jesus) "is against me;" and therefore **you** are against him. The whole influence of your example, conversation and life is against him. Your associates are

affected by it, and some of them have been ruined by it. It is probable there are persons to-day in outer darkness, and shall be there forever, who were sunk thither mainly by your influence. And I know that there are others yet alive, who have been much injured, and whose eternal all is now in jeopardy through you; and they in turn are already cumbering the ground—already by their conversation, spirit and example are commencing what must issue in a work of moral havoc and ruin around them.

Finally, consider that this state of things must soon end. Your time of probation will soon be past and past forever. We are now nearing the close of another year—standing by the bedside of dying time. It may be Jesus, the great Vine-dresser, as we are about to enter a new year, is pleading for you in heaven, and saying, "Spare it this year alone, and if it bear fruit, well; but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Will you remain irreligious longer? Why will you die?

## SERMON XX.

# The Parable of the Great Supper.

LUKE XIV. 21.

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We have seen that the offer of the gospel is universal; that it is to all men, "to every man," to "whosoever will," "to every creature." I have made the offer to you; I have called you to the supper of the great Master; I have offered it to you freely, without money and without price; I have assured you of a cordial welcome and of glorious entertainment, if you will but come; I have instructed you that no preparation on your part is necessary. If you are but willing to come, you shall find all things ready.

Now have you all accepted? Remains there no unbeliever here to-day? Oh, would I could believe that all of you had embraced the great salvation! Would, as I look abroad over this assemblage of acquaintances and neighbors and personal friends, that I could believe, hope, that you were God's—all God's—that the bitterness of death had passed away from you all, and that we could all meet in glory, at

the marriage supper of the Lamb! But I can not be so happy as to indulge this pleasing thought. I have, alas! too many reasons to fear that many of my hearers are still "with one consent making excuses" for not accepting the offers, which, in God's name, I have made you.

Having shown that your excuses are invalid, I shall now, as the text requires, show that your unbelief is a sin with which God has great cause to be angry.

1. And first remember that you are all sinners, very great sinners, guilty and condemned before God, unclean and unholy, and so not fit for the favor and the fellowship of God. Not that I suppose you to be low, coarse, brutal sinners. Such men do not usually attend upon the services of the sanctuary, though some such may be here to-day, and, if so, are of course addressed in this argument. But, my unbelieving friends, however moral and orderly and genteel, however refined and tasteful and elegant you may be, still you are sinners before God, very great sinners. You know this to be true. Not a man lives whose conscience does not condemn him, if he will but listen to it. From your Bibles, from the pulpit, and from your own accusing consciences, you have learned, or might have learned, much of the wickedness of your own heart and life.

2. And it is only by believing in Christ that you can be released from your state of guilt, wickedness and condemnation, and be saved. There is no other peace for your soul than peace in Jesus Christ; there is no other reconciliation with God than reconcilia-

tion through Immanuel; there is no other name given under heaven whereby you must be saved than his. And you know this to be true; you admit it to be true; it is so stated in the Bible; it is stated there so plainly that it is impossible for you to have missed finding it. If you have not found it there, it is because you have willfully closed your eyes to the truth; and, if finding it, you do not believe it to be true, then you are an infidel.

3. Furthermore, you find in that same Bible, that God offers salvation to all men, that he offers it to you—full, free, instant and everlasting salvation. No matter who or what you are, or have been, you are invited to this feast. To you is the word of this salvation sent. God is willing and proclaims himself willing to take you now, just as you are, to pardon you and to be at peace with you; to sanctify your whole spirit and soul and body; to be your leader and guide, your strength and your stay, your everlasting all and in all, your salvation in time and your portion in eternity. All this God offers to do—to do now—to do freely, without any money or merit on your part. And you refuse. All this has he over and often offered to do, and you have refused. All this is he now offering to do, and ye refuse. And is all this without sin on your part? Is this consistent with the duty you owe to God and to yourselves?

4. I know you feel that you are not pursuing a very safe course. But are you not also pursuing a very wicked one? I know you feel that the way you are in is a way in which it were not safe to die; but do you not feel that it is a way in which you offend

God? Is not this trampling on the blood of Christ, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace? True, you feel there is danger in delay, and you think not of delaying always. Perhaps it is your purpose not to delay a great while longer. But does it not occur to you that it is the height of presumptuous rebellion to delay at all, even for a single instant? And when you sometimes reflect, uneasily, and with dark forebodings, on your sins before God, and your danger, do you not totally forget the greatest of all your sins, and the most terrific of all your dangers—the sin and danger of unbelief?

5. But whatever you may think of it, our text assures us of what God thinks of it and how he will deal with it. No matter what your excuses may be, with the Master of the feast they are not excuses at all, but aggravations of your sin, and when he hears them "he is angry." And consider, I pray you, how he manifests his anger. Consider how he dealt with the unbelieving Jews. He finally rejected them; he gave them over to a reprobate mind; he swore in his wrath that they should not taste of his supper, and sent forth his armies and burnt up their cities. Here let us note the terrible manner in which he has manifested his anger upon them, for their unbelieving rejection of his mercy. He made them the same offers which he makes you to-day; he would have received them and saved them; he would have saved them from all their enemies, and from the hands of them that hated them, and have been the glory of his people, Israel. As a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, he would have protected and cher-

ished them, but they would not; they would not receive him as the Messiah of God, nor confide in him for salvation, nor obey his law, nor receive his teachings. Consequently God was angry, and they were rejected of him, and all the curses which are written in his book were sent upon them. And now, for over eighteen hundred years, they have stood, the living monument of God's anger against unbelief. They obstinately rejected Christ, and now Christ has rejected them. They hated Christ, and now he has made the pestilence cleave to them and consume them, from generation to generation. He has smitten them with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew. The heaven that is over their head has been brass, and the earth that is under their feet has been iron, and the rain of their land has been powder and dust. Jehovah has smitten them before their enemies. They went out one way against them, and have fled seven ways before them, and have been removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. Their carcasses have been meat to all the fowls of the air and to all the beasts of the field, and there have been none to fray them away. Jehovah has smitten them with madness and blindness and astonishment of heart. He has made them to grope at noon-day, as the blind grope in darkness. They have only been oppressed and spoiled evermore, and have become an astonishment and a proverb and a by-word among the nations. And during all this long and weary woe of centu-

ries, they have not found ease, nor has the sole of their foot found rest. Among all nations whither they have gone, have they been driven. But wherever they have gone, God has given them there a trembling of heart and failing of eyes and sorrow of mind. And their life has been in doubt before them; they have feared by day and by night, and have had none assurance of their life, insomuch that when it was evening they cried, "Would to God it were morning," and when it was morning, "Would to God it were evening," for the fear of their hearts wherewith they had feared, and for the sight of their eyes which they have seen.*

Now why this uttermost wrath upon Israel? Why this trouble, and trepidation, and treading down? Why this famine, and war, and banishment, and blight, and mildew? This madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart? It was because they would not accept the invitation to the supper; it was because they would not rest on and believe in Christ. He would have folded them to his bosom, but they put him far away. They were too much engrossed by farms and oxen and wives to receive the Lord as the portion of their soul. Like yourselves, my hearers, they were too intent upon houses, and harvests, and business, and barter, and weddings, and witcheries, to spend serious thoughts upon the distant but mighty realities that were hurrying upon them; and so they deliberately put Christ away from them and sold their souls for a mess of pottage. Do not tell me they were greater sinners than you, and

* Deuteronomy xxviii. 21-67.

that they were punished because they crucified Christ. I tell you, and the text tells you, that it was for refusing Christ. Even after the crucifixion the gospel was preached unto them; they were invited, and urged, and entreated, and importuned, to turn and live; and had that guilty people done so, they would have been spared. It was not the mere physical act of crucifixion, but it was the unbelief that led them to the act, and which, still rankling in their hearts, led them, under one pretense or another, as it now leads you, obstinately to persist in rejecting the offered Mediator. This obstinate unbelief it was that brought their sorrow of long centuries upon them, that drew down the lightning from the surcharged heavens upon them.

Consider then, my friends, your condition. You are not gross and scandalous sinners; you respect the second table of the law; you discharge your duties to your fellow-men; you have reputation for morality, and justice, and gentility. But you live every day in the commission of a greater offense than would be all these together. You live in unbelief; you neglect the great salvation; you know you are sinners; reason and conscience and the word of God tell you that you are very great sinners, and yet you reject God's plan for saving you—the only plan by which you can be saved. You deliberately choose to live in sin; to continue unreconciled to God; to trample on the blood of Christ; to count it an unholy thing, or, to say the least, that you see no need of him, and that you desire not the knowledge of his ways.

These are some of the things with which you are

chargeable, whilst you live in the sin of unbelief, and these are some of the things which, unless timely repentance prevent it, will result in the just and unspeakable aggravation of your final condemnation.

I wish exceedingly, my hearers, that I could persuade you to look on unbelief as a sin, and as one of the greatest of sins. I am persuaded you do not think of it aright. When, from Sabbath to Sabbath, I urge you to flee from the coming wrath, to lay hold on Christ and his offered salvation; when I urge you, by all the glories of heaven, by all the terrors of hell, by the worth of the soul, by the length of eternity, by the love of Christ, by the strivings of the Spirit, by the shortness of life, by the certainty of death, by all the motives, in short, which ought to have force with spiritual and immortal beings, to come to the supper, to lay hold on Christ, to bring your wretched persons to him, for justifying righteousness and for sanctifying grace, and when you refuse—when, the services over, you venture to rise from your seats and go home, without yielding yourselves to Christ, to be sanctified and to be saved by him and to be his servants forever—when so many of you do feel, no doubt, that you have done a very unsafe thing, that such a course is dangerous, and you think of some vague, unsettled time in the future, when you will do differently—but did it ever occur to you, that your conduct was something more than unsafe—that it was wicked—that when the guests were invited and did not accept the invitation that the king was

wroth on account of it? Many, no doubt, are the sins with which your conscience charges you through the week; but has it never occurred to you, that the greatest of all, nay, that a greater than all of them put together, is the sin which, from Sabbath to Sabbath, you commit in refusing Christ as your Savior?

We hear much of the sins which are common among all classes of citizens. We lament, for example, the sin of Sabbath desecration. Our hearts are oppressed with the sight which our streets and our places of public resort present from Sabbath to Sabbath. Our ears tingle at the oath and the blasphemies to which we are compelled to listen every day. Our sympathies are agonized over sons and friends and neighbors, who destroy themselves in drunken debauch. We bow ourselves down in the very sadness of sorrow at the exhibition of godlessness, which we have witnessed from year to year, among those high in place and power in our land. We deplore the lust of national aggrandizement, which is rife among all our population. But did it never occur to you, that unbelief, the rejection of Christ, was a sin more common, and one that cries louder to God than all these together—that, in fact, this is the Alma Mater, which cherishes all those crimes which we so deplore; that it is the very head and chief of all; that this alone, in its universality and its enormity, overbalances by an almost infinite preponderance all our other sins together, and that great and crying as it is, it is the very one with which so many of you are chargeable? Perhaps there is not a man among you all who would not

shrink back in horror from any one of the crimes I have mentioned. I am deceived in my people, if there are any here who have lost their veneration for the sanctity of the holy Sabbath; or who are not shocked at the hearing of profanity from the lips which God at first attuned to praise and prayer; or that would not withdraw their steps from the house of the impudent and the strange woman, as they would from the paths that go down to hell. But has it never occurred to you, that your daily and hourly disbelief is a sin that overtops them all? You lament that so many trample upon the Sabbath, and yet you trample upon the choicest heart-blood of the God of the Sabbath. You deplore that any one should utter oaths and blasphemies, and yet you call the very blood of the covenant, wherewith Christ was sanctified, an unholy thing. You sigh over the wrongs that are inflicted upon the widow, the orphan and the slave, and yet you smother your own conscience to death and do despite to the Spirit of God.

I would like to impress these thoughts upon you. I would like you to think more of the sin and the danger of unbelief.

You think when I urge you to come to Christ, that it is at your option whether you do so or not. You never dream of criminality in the case. Or, if you know it is so, still the knowledge is thrown by among the useless lumber of the mind, and it is as though you knew it not. You may have learned it, but you have never laid to heart, that the King is wroth, when you begin to make excuses, or when

you procrastinate—that great as may have been the sins of any of you, through the week that is past away, the sin with which you commenced the week and which ran all through it, with which you are now commencing another week—I mean the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ, as your Savior, is the great crowning, crying sin of all, the one which more than all the others will draw down the hottest, heaviest, hardest vengeance on you.

Let us look at this sin. Let us analyze it. Let us measure its proportions, and I am sure you will agree with me. I, in God's name, do this day invite you to this feast. I offer you Christ and all his fullness, and urge you to accept the offer; and very many of you pay no attention whatever. For some reason or other, you go home unbelievers and non-professors. Now what is the sin you commit in so doing? If you leave the church to-day, as in days that are past, without coming to Christ and surrendering yourselves heart and soul to him, what, I ask, is the character of the sin which you commit?

In the first place, unbelief is a rejection of God's plan of love for your salvation. You are sinners, and as such are obnoxious to the vengeance of a holy and violated law. Death, temporal, spiritual and eternal is denounced, necessarily denounced, upon the transgressor. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." God's truth and justice, aye, and his goodness too, are pledged that sin should not pass with impunity, but that it should be

stamped with the seal of his infinite and everlasting reprobation. The consequence, therefore, of your sins is, that the attributes of the Godhead are arrayed against you.

But Jesus Christ offers to stand between you and the law of God. He offers to bear its penalty, to receive its stroke, and to drink and drain all its vials of bitterness. And to refuse Christ is simply to refuse pardon at the hand of God. It is coolly and deliberately to say that you do not desire to be on a friendly footing with the Sovereign of the universe, that you have incurred his displeasure, but so far are you from repenting or relenting that you glory in your deeds. But there is more than a refusal of pardon. For every effect, there is a cause. You are chargeable with sinful acts because you have a disposition to act sinfully, just as a mineral stream reveals a mineral fountain. It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh, and the corrupt fruit reveals the tree to have been evil. As your conduct is unlike that of the saints and angels and cherubs and seraphs, so your nature is unlike theirs. Your heart, indeed, is so far removed from the frame and temper of heaven, that even if your sins were pardoned, you could not be received into, nor enjoy heaven, until your sinful disposition should be changed and sanctified. And in refusing Christ, you reject the only way in which it is possible to be freed from the filth and pollution and the utter depravity of your heart. To refuse to come to Christ now is simply to say that you do not choose to part with your heart of stone

and filth and vanity. It is to say there is to you a luxury in your evil heart of unbelief and of enmity to God, with which you are unwilling to part. It is to say, God may call into requisition the rich stores of goodness and wisdom and grace, in devising a plan for my salvation to a state of holiness and happiness. He may put upon himself all the arts of a bereaved father, to win his worthless son back to his yearning embrace—and heaven and earth and angels above and saints below may put forth the bustle and strenuousness of earnest exertion—parents and pastors and saintly friends may pray and weep in secret places, for my pride. I thank them but little for their pains. I will not go to the feast of fat things. I will not receive the Savior of sinners. I will not part with my wicked heart. I will not receive remission at his hands, nor do I desire that he should make me holy. I will not receive from his hands a regenerated and sanctified spirit. I will go on frowardly in the way of my heart. Is this the answer you give to me and to the God that sent me to-day? Must I, like the servants in the parable, return this as your answer? I must return some answer to Him that sent me and commanded me to bid you to the feast. Oh, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, what shall I answer? This is no poetic fiction, no creation of imagination. I must return some answer, at the day, when God will bring every work into judgment. Then, if not before, upon the peril of my soul, I must answer! Most of you are my personal friends, my intimate and beloved companions, and I make my appeal to you.

What shall I answer? That you have coolly and deliberately refused his loving, gracious overtures? Neighbors and friends, that is a hard answer. If you have no pity for yourselves, no love for God, have some for me! As you love me, make me not the bearer of such tidings to your Father and mine!

We have spent happy hours together, and after all this, shall I in the hour of your extremest need, when every nerve thrills with agony, and your whole soul is dissolved in fear, shall I add to it, by the affirmation, that in such a day and in such a place, I did, with all the power and earnestness I had, urge upon you to accept the invitation to the wedding, and such and such was your answer?

No! no! you all say, this is not what we would have you return as our answer. We do not utterly refuse Christ; we have not resolved *not* to receive pardon and a new heart at his hands; we only postpone it for a little while; we will accept the invitation by and by; we only wish that our God would excuse us for a little while. Next fall, or next year, or before long, we will come to the feast; we will receive Christ; we will join his Church; we will profess his name, and betake ourselves to prayer, and self-denial, and to a Christian walk. There are many reasons why we should not come to the feast just now. I am so young yet, or my chattel property, or my real estate demands all my attention. I can read the expression of your countenance, and your imploring looks beseech me not to say to the Master that you refuse to come. If I understand you aright, you only wish to be excused for the present, and

when your wedding is over, when your farms and your oxen are looked after, then you will come to the great feast that God has spread in his Church; then you will receive the holy sacraments and the Christ that is made over to you in them; and then you will erect a family altar and a closet, and consecrate yourselves and your houses to God.

And is this after all the answer that, with a heavy heart, I must give to Him that sent me? Do you imagine that this will satisfy our King, our loving Lord? or that he will not be justly wroth when he receives it? Do you imagine that you can hide the state of your hearts from his all-seeing eye by these fine phrases? Do you imagine that his piercing vision will not be able to penetrate the gossamer of this disguise? Do you think he will not be able to see, after all, what perhaps you have fondly overlooked, that the true reason of all this delay is that you have a secret, but strong aversion to him, and his services, and his salvation?

Yes, my friends, it is worthy of your notice that this hesitation, and this delay, and these excuses, spring from a heart that at the bottom loathes evangelical religion. If you really loved the feast and the Giver; if you really desired that God should pardon all your sins, and receive you into his favor, and sanctify you in soul and body; I say, if you really loved and desired all these things, you would accept them now; you would not put it off until next fall; you would not put it off until next Sabbath; you would not put it off until the end of the sermon—but this day, this hour, this moment, al-

most before my lips had finished the articulation of the invitation, your hearts would leap for joy, and your lips would be already pronouncing the sentence of acceptation. I repeat it, it is because you neither love the King, nor his cause, nor his feast, nor the guests, that you hesitate to go. It is because, at the bottom, you secretly loathe them all, that you wish to put it off till a future period. Can you wonder, then, if the King be angry? Under the vail of this fine phraseology, you bid me return for your answer that you loathe the King and his goodness; that you will not come while you can avoid it; that after a while, when you can no longer safely delay, then you will reluctantly come. Shall you, even in the finest and most delicate way imaginable, return such an answer to the King, and then imagine he will not be wroth? Is an insult the less keen and cutting, because spoken in a courtly style? Is the dagger less efficient because the robber that cuts your throat does it with the skill of a practical anatomist? And is this deep and bitter disgust at God and his goodness the less offensive because expressed in the attic style of a plausible phraseology?

Oh, my friends, believe it not. These plausibilities may deceive you; they have deceived you; they have hid away from the eye of your conscience the desperate aversion to religion that is rankling in the deep bottom of your souls. But do not imagine you can so deceive Him, whose eyes are as a flame of fire to search the heart and understand all its secrets. How stands the matter with you? Let us see. Here is a young man of many accomplishments, high-hearted

and ambitious, but struggling with adversity. It is in my power and I offer him the most splendid position in the world, magnificent estate, great power, numerous friends and world-wide fame. Will he delay to accept the offer? Will he not close the covenant upon the instant? As with eager earnestness I press it on him, will *he* hesitate and struggle and hunt up pleas and pretexts for deferring? Far from it. He will consent at once, with beaming face, to his fortune. But here is another needing my kindly offices—a young, tender, timid, beautiful girl, brought up a sweet, innocent lamb, on the warm bosom of loving parents, who would never allow even the winds of heaven to visit her too roughly—afflicted by some painful disease. It is necessary that the amputating knife of the surgeon do its work in order to save her life. The most skillful of physicians, I tender my services and my skill at once, and for nothing. She knows the terrible necessity she is under; she knows the generous offer I make her, and yet she hesitates, trembles, and delays the evil hour as long as possible. And why? Simply because the dreaded operation is painful to her.

And now, my friends, can not you read this parable? Do you not see at once that you do not accept Christ and his salvation simply because you dread to be turned from your sins to God? Do you not stand convicted of loving sin and hating God?

## SERMON XXI.

# The Parable of the Prodigal Son.

LUKE XV. 11–32.

On a certain occasion, when Jesus was preaching the gospel of the kingdom, the publicans drew near to hear him. He did not repel, but encouraged their advances. The Pharisees murmured at this, saying, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." In this parable the Savior justifies himself, encourages the publicans and sinners to repent and be saved, and sets before the Pharisees a true, but odious, picture of their conduct.

### GENERAL EXPLICATION.

The father in the parable represents God; the father's house, the Church of God; and, the two sons, two classes connected with the Church. The elder son, moral and orderly, but of a legal, narrow and selfish turn, stands for the scribes and Pharisees, and the younger represents the publicans and sinners. Both these sons were for a time members of the Father's house, the Church of God, and were

federally the sons of God. They were both Jews, descendants of Abraham, and had been circumcised. Both had been planted, like fig-trees, in God's vineyard, and had been cultivated by the vine-dressers. But now, in after-life, there had come to be a wide difference between them. The one class, the scribes and Pharisees, still retained their place in the Church. The other class, the publicans and sinners, had long ago cast off all appearance of piety. They had even cut loose from the restraints of virtue and morality. They had gone far from their Father's house—from all the ordinances and institutions of religion, and had wandered in the ways of rapacity and excess. For this they were disowned and despised by the Pharisee. They were separated not only from his communion, but from his sympathy. Nor were their more decent and orderly brethren willing ever again to receive them into favor or fellowship.

Now the Savior, in this parable, tells the scribes and Pharisees that they did wrong in thus excluding their erring brethren from their sympathies, from opportunities of restoration, and from hopes of heaven. He assures them that if these poor, erring outcasts will only return, the great Father of the House, the Head of the Church, will heal their backslidings and receive them home to heaven.

In this parable we have, first, the sinner's apostasy traced through its various stages on down to the extremest depths of infamy and misery, the history of his return to God, and of his cordial and joyful reception. Then, second, we have the conduct

of the scribes and Pharisees, in murmuring against the Savior for his grace to the publicans and sinners, delineated in its true colors.

1. *The history of the profligate.* "A certain man had two sons," living with him in his house. The younger son, put forward here as the representative of publicans and sinners, had been, along with the elder, planted by the grace of God in the Church. The covenant had been not only with his fathers, but with him. In his early childhood he had received the sign of circumcision, the emblem of moral purity, and the seal of the righteousness of faith. To him had been given an early training in piety, abundant means of grace, the ordinances of the Church and the instructions of the priesthood—a summer and harvest time of privilege and opportunity. Had the publicans and sinners been heathen; had they never been instructed in the knowledge of the law, of virtue, and of holiness; had the God above bestowed no special care and love upon them, their crime had been less aggravated. Alas, how many baptized youth of the Church, in every age, follow the footsteps of the Prodigal adown the dreary, dismal road of apostasy from the Church and the God of their fathers, but never follow the footsteps of his return! How many, instead of improving their privileges and rejoicing in their mercies and stirring up their full souls to bless God for all his gracious benefits, do weary of the duties and the restraints and the ordidances of religion; weary of the family prayers and

family piety of their Father's house; weary of the the society of the spiritual and holy; weary of the teachings of the sanctuary, the monitions of the word and the restraints of conscience, and so take the course of the Prodigal for long wretched years together, and even follow it on down to hell!

But what an argument is here for the encouragement of sinners to return to God—sinners of every class, and even the worst among them all! For who will be rejected, when such an apostate as this Prodigal is received?—a man who had not only proved the utmost depths and utmost littleness of sin; but who had done this notwithstanding all the advantages and all the mercies of his early years. What a picture is here drawn of the lovingkindness and the tender mercies of our God! A distinguished writer says: "Would Christ not have deserved well of humanity, if he had done nothing else than deliver this parable, or history, with its meaning? I may boldly say, Where is there anything to be found like this parable? What human teacher has placed the folly of human nature and the consequences of this folly in such clear and graphic colors before our eyes; and in contrast therewith has given, of the long-suffering and compassion of God, so inexpressibly rich an exhibition, as is done in this discourse, which also has no parallel for its adaptation to all? Had Christ only come to the earth for the purpose of delivering this parable, on that account alone should all mortal and immortal beings concur in bending the knee before him, and

confessing that he is a Son immeasurably superior to all others."*

But let us proceed with the history.

2. "And the younger of them said to his father, Father, *give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.*" Here you have the root and essence of all sin—the alienation of the heart from God, the ceasing to find our happiness and hope in our Father's house and our Father's love. In having God for his Father, and God's house (the Church) for his home, the younger son had everything. But when his heart turned away from God as his chief good, and placed its happiness in something else, and longed for it instead of for him, and desired its enjoyment separately from him, then he was already a sin-blinded and ruined man.

For what is the essence and sum of all heart-sin but this, even a turning away of the heart from the Creator to the creature, and the worshiping and serving of it instead of him? This was man's ruin at first. He placed his good not in God, but in something else. He hoped to derive more advantage from "the tree which was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise," than from keeping the divine law. And so it has ever been. Men wish, like the Prodigal, to enjoy all good things, and to enjoy them away from God. They have in them an evil heart that still wearies to depart and get away from the living God, and take his creatures and enjoy them as his source of their happiness. They say to gold, "Thou art

* Lavater.

my trust, and to the fine gold, thou art my hope," but they say not, "Where is my Maker?" Oh! how many youth in all our congregations, baptized into the covenant, have a secret weariness of God and his law, and a secret and growing desire to be delivered from all piety and prayer, and from all the restraints and forms of religion, and are wishing but to have their portion of goods that they may go with them into some country far from God and live in sin, unmolested by the restraints which beset them now. "They grow weary of living upon God and his fullness, and desire to take the ordering of their life into their own hands, believing that they can be a fountain of blessedness to themselves."*

3. "*And he divided unto them his living.*" By this are meant the blessings of creation and providence which God bestows on the men who have departed from him, and which they spend on their lusts. All the blessings which the apostatizing child enjoys are from God—all health, strength, activity and beauty of body; all his powers, physical, intellectual and moral; wealth, intelligence and social position—these all are from God. He has created the man himself a free agent. He lays no restraint upon his will; he can be ungrateful if he chooses. At the very time when this recreant and ungrateful son is in his heart wearying of God and his service, that God, as a Father of infinite goodness, is watching over him to do him good. He fences him with bones and sinews, covers him with flesh and skin, strings his young and brawny frame with strength,

* Trench.

and clothes his glossy brow with its rich and clustering curls. It is He, the Father, from whose presence he wishes to be gone, that fills his young heart with the warm, wild gushings of its joyous emotions, and illumines his clear, eagle eye with the kindlings of a manly and immortal intelligence. It is He who has surrounded him with every worldly comfort, and with all the advantages which spring from social position, connection with the Church (the Father's house), and from association with the intelligent, the pure and the good. All this, and much more, is God doing for his ungrateful, apostatizing children, and if they will but love and obey him, he hath in store for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Surely there must be some horrible ingratitude and perverseness in him who finds the presence and service of such a Father and Friend a restraint upon his actions, and a marring of his joy, and who wishes to take all the precious gifts and benefits with which he has been loaded, exile himself from his Father's house and presence, and live to himself and for himself, forgetful of his Father and his Father's house. If such treatment of an earthly parent is indicative of monstrous ingratitude, and betokens a rueful end, what must be his character who will thus demean himself toward God.

Still our heavenly Father leaves men free; and if they pervert and abuse their freedom, they must bear the consequences. You *may*, my dear children, take this course if you will; you *may* seize all the choice blessings with which the munificent

hand of your Father has loaded you down, and leave your Father's house forever. God will not compel you to remain against your will. You *may* cast away from your heart every trace of religious feeling; you may give the prayers your mother taught you to the winds; you may profane all your Sabbaths, despise every sanctuary, and utterly absent yourselves from the company of the godly; you may blaspheme your baptism, and do despite to the Spirit of grace, and drink up scorning like water—and, seizing all the blessings bestowed by God upon you, you may take your journey afar into fields black and blasted by sin, and riot and revel there in your shame. All this, young man, you *may* do if you will. But let us see what the end of such a course will be.

4. "*And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country.*" And why does he go? It is because he loves not his father. His father's presence is a restraint. He esteems the government of his father's house as slavery; its society is a solitude to him; he longs to be free. And now the apostasy of his heart is followed by the apostasy of his life. Dead to all home affections, with his deceived heart set on folly, he gathers his all together and departs into a far country—goes out into a world of sin to become an undisguised sinner—deliberately goes out from the heavenly away down into the earthly—from the high, and pure, and spiritual, deep into the groveling, and polluted, and carnal.

Nor is he content to depart; but he goes far away. He becomes no common sinner; he casts away all

thoughts of God, and Christ, and heaven, of death, and judgment, and eternity; he thrusts away all fear and neglects all forms of religion. And now at last he is free. He has got rid of prayers, and psalms, and Sabbaths, and sermons, and so he drinks up iniquity like water. "Wickedness is sweet in his mouth, and he hides it under his tongue. He spares it and forsakes it not, but keeps it still within his mouth."* He frequents the assemblies of the wicked. No heart has he for the little prayer-meeting; but he is at the ball, the theater, the horse-race, the card-table, and the drinking-saloon. No relish has he for the beauties, and purities, and sublimities of the Bible; but he dreams whole nights over trashy fictions, and lewd and demoralizing books. Never now do prayers or praises steal from his tongue; but of libidinous songs, and low, lascivious dances, his lips and feet are never weary. Already is his voice hoarse with profanity, and his cheek flushed, and his breath hot with riotous excess. He walks the foremost and bravest in all the counsel of the ungodly; he stands in the way of sinners; he sits in the seat of the scorner. Through the pride of his countenance he will not call on God. God is not in all his thoughts. He saith in his heart, "I shall not be moved; I shall never be in adversity."

So now he is free. Now is he "Lord of himself—that heritage of woe." Now he leads the life his soul longed for—a life of recklessness, and vanity, and pleasure—a life devoted to mirth and music, riot and revelry. Now the rosy hours reel round on

* Job xx. 12, 13.

feathered feet. Surely he is happy! But no! His heart is empty and wretched as ever. Amid all his excess there is hollowness, and hunger, and feverish restlessness in his soul. His desires are hungry as the lank and gasping jaws of death; they enlarge themselves as the grave, and are not satisfied. Heart-sick he cries, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The poor wretch, mayhap, has been as successful as Solomon in the pursuits of earth. He may have made great works—building houses, making gardens and orchards, and planting in them all kinds of fruits, gathering gold and silver, and all kinds of wealth, and withholding nothing from his eyes that they desired. But now behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit—all is madness and folly.*

> "Pleasures are like poppies spread,
> You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
> Or like the snow-falls in the river,
> A moment white—then melt forever;
> Or like the borealis race,
> That flit ere you can point their place;
> Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
> Evanishing amid the storm"—

And leaving the heart an empty, hungering and wretched thing. Such was the misguided Prodigal, even when spending all his substance on "harlots and riotous living."

5. "*And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.*"

The dream of pleasure does not last. Fortune fails; or, if not, the powers of nature fail and leave the profligate utterly wretched. The brow grows

* Ecclesiastes ii. 4–11.

haggard; the cheek and body bloats; pains seize upon the physical organs; the fetid breath comes reeking from rotting vitals; conscience tortures; remorse gnaws inwardly with ruthless fang; the rosy hours of joy have flown; lovers and friends, that were kind before, stand at a distance. He awakes to find himself forsaken, hungry and wretched; he has pursued the lovely, but illusive mirage of the desert; he plucked the beautiful, but bitter apples of Sodom, and now he is undone. His all is now gone; he begins to be in want; he now begins to perceive the hollowness and vanity of those treacherous illusions which he had chosen as his portion. The pleasures of sin can no more satisfy. For a time he may have imagined that he was doing well afar from God; but at last he finds himself miserable—he feels the pressure of the "mighty famine" that is upon him; he has come to that point in profligacy, where, though the fierce appetites and passions of the miscreant are as fierce as ever, nature's failing powers are impotent to indulge them. "There arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want." What a picture of a man whose powers have been exhausted by a long course of debauchery, but whose appetites are even more fierce and imperious than before. Miserable man! What a famine, what a parching thirst, what a consuming hunger, what an exquisite misery is his—lorded over and goaded on, as he is, by appetites which his abused and worn-out powers are impotent to gratify! This, this is a fire that consumes to destruction, and eats the marrow out of the bones. And to this the

Prodigal comes. He who would be lord of himself; he who considered the wholesome and life-giving laws of his father's house a yoke of bondage; he who esteemed the easy yoke of Jesus heavy, and would not have God for a King to rule over him—he is now the wretched, tortured slave of his own lusts; he who would not yield his members instruments of righteousness, but madly resolved to yield them instruments of unrighteousness and sin, has now become the servant and the slave of sin, a master who feeds him on toads and adders, and drives and lashes him day and night, as with a scourge of scorpions.

"A mighty famine arose in that land; and he began to be in want." Oh, the physical torture and the soul-desolation of that profligate upon whom this famine has laid its ruthless and unrelenting hand! No outward fortune or estate can shield from its grasp, or abate its violence. "It sits down an unbidden guest at the rich man's table, and finds its way into the palaces of kings." And there, in the midst of his music and mirth, and by the side of his richly laden table, the famine-struck Prodigal felt the gnawings of soul-hunger, and pined away in his misery. In the midst of all his outward splendor, there was a canker-worm gnawing at his heart. That was a bitter wail, uttered by one of the proudest of England's nobles, amid all that rank, and genius, and fortune could give him—himself a Prodigal, when he exclaimed, and exclaimed too before he had run half of man's allotted time on earth:

"My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of love are gone,
The worm, the canker and the grief
Are mine alone.

"The fire that on my bosom preys,
Is lone as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze,
A funeral pile."

Or as the same bright, but blasted and bitter soul exclaims elsewhere:

"The serpent of the field, by art
And spells, is won from harming;
But that which coils around the heart,
Oh, who hath power of charming?
It will not list to Wisdom's lore,
Nor Music's voice can lure it;
But there it stings forevermore
The soul that must endure it."

6. But even these are not the lowest depths to which sin reduces the sinner. The Prodigal is doomed to a deeper degradation and a drearier desolation. "He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country." How changed! He who would not brook the place of a son in his father's house is now content to occupy the menial position of a *sycophantic parasite** in the house of a stranger. Formerly a son at home, now a servant in a strange land; formerly the happy and respected heir of an opulent father, now an outcast, contemptible, base and wretched. But that is not all. There is a yet

* PARASITE.—Such is the force of the word in the original, here rendered "joined." (We understand the word to mean simply to *cleave to* or *associate with*. See Acts v. 13; xvii. 34. Romans xii. 9. The context, however, shows that the Prodigal occupied a menial and despicable position.)—ED.

bitterer ingredient in his cup of misery. He is "*sent to the fields to feed swine.*" Any other employment would have been less humiliating. He, a Jew, sent to feed swine—animals held as unclean, and detestable, and abominable by every Jew! Appalling fall! He has at last become a pimp and bawd—a creature whose business it is to minister to the infamous appetites of the unclean and filthy—to preside over the lowest establishments of infamy known in the annals of crime. And still his insatiable appetite goads him by day and night, insomuch that he would fain satisfy it with the husks eaten by the swine—he would join in the wild and hellish revels of that infamous brothel over which, amid its reeking fumes, his master, the devil, has sent him to preside.

And even there is he the lowest of the low. None so drunken and bloated and profane and fierce and delirious as he. Even his wretched associates shrink from his brutal embrace. "He would fain have filled his belly" (sated his beastly and unappeasable desires) "with the husks the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him" Again, I say, appalling fall! For the baptized member of the Church to wander from his Father's house—go far away into the world that lieth in sin, and there sink down, down, down, to the condition of a swine-herd, having run all the rounds of infamy himself, until exhausted nature can bear no more—to become a bawd to the rank and reeking lusts of the lowest and most loathsome of men, and to sink so far below them all that none among them can tolerate his brutal companionship,

but all forsake him and leave him to the unrelieved and unpitied misery of passions and appetites as fierce and hot as hell! Surely this is the extreme of human misery on earth. Surely there is no deeper depths of misery on this side of the outer darkness and the lake of fire.

And now be assured, my hearers, and especially ye dear youth, lambs of my flock, sealed up into the Church of God, by these hands, at the baptismal font, be assured I draw no fancy sketch. In all our cities there are just such baptized, wretched prodigals as are painted in our parable. Gifted young men and lovely girls, who have gone away from their father and from his goodly house, into a far country and there squandered their all, and, rushing from one depth of misery and shame into another, do now occupy the condition of the swineherd—soon to be cast away and forsaken by all and left unrelieved and unpitied to perish by the most terrible of deaths. Some of you may even now be beginning to grow weary of the restraints of religion and the society of the godly, and may be casting a wishful eye upon the companies and the delights of sinners. Well, go and cast in your lot with them if you will. The country, that lies afar, decks itself with the harlot's robe and lights its cheek with a harlot's smile, and says, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." Well, if your heart is set upon it, go! Go, and love them that hate the Lord. Go, and squander all your youthful gifts and powers. These revelers will welcome you while your substance lasts. While beauty or wit or wealth

holds out, they will burn daily incense upon your altar. But, remember! When all is gone—when passion goads you on—when impotent nature flags, exhausted under the lash of scorpions—when bloated and blasted, a weary, worn and wretched thing, you sink down to die—then those very companions will abhor and forsake you; and unless God pity you or Christians compassionate you, you will, without a friend in the universe, perish forever. Such, unless a late repentance had prevented it, had been the end of the Prodigal Son.

7. Wretched condition! Well does the happy and rejoicing father, on his son's return, speak of him as one that was "dead" and "lost." He had been dead to virtue and holiness—dead to God and heaven—dead to peace and happiness—dead to every affection and desire that ought to inspire an immortal soul.

And well does the parable represent the Prodigal in his sins as delirious and mad, and his repentance as a returning to his right mind. For surely a man must be *mad* to make the Prodigal's choice. For an immortal soul, with all its wondrous, deathless powers, with all its mighty capacities and susceptibilities, with all its yearnings after the high and good and glorious and eternal—for such a soul as this, born of pious parents, baptized and bred up in the Church of the living God, and an heir of all its precious heritage of privilege and of promise; watched over by parents and pastors and holy angels; with the glorious and blessed Jesus offering to befriend and watch over him through life, to

save him in death, and to make him blessed, glorious and immortal in the bright and beatific halls of heaven—a peer and prince of the angels, nearer the throne and louder in song than they; and all this through the mighty roll of eternal ages—I say, for such a soul to turn away from such a heritage, to wander far away from that Father's house and heart; to barter all its ineffable possessions and prospects for a mess of pottage; to exchange them all for the pleasures of sin for a season—surely such a soul is *mad*. Surely reason is dethroned and conscience dead. Surely devilish and deadly delirium has seized upon its faculties and sent it forth a wandering star to which the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

But, no. Deplorable as has been his fall, horrible as have been his crimes, odious as is his character; unworthy as he is of the least mercy from the hand of God, his case is not yet hopeless. If the wretched outcast—the paramour and the pimp of harlots and sinners—will but in his misery consider his ways and return to God, there is room for him still in his Father's house and heart. If he will but return, there will be the glad and eager forthgoing of that Father to meet him, and embrace him, and welcome him back; and the robe, the ring and the fatted calf, and music and dancing, are all in readiness for his reception.

II. Therefore let us trace his repentance, his return and his reception home.*

* The remaining part of the discourse is given in the author's MSS. only in the form of a skeleton.—ED.

1. He is brought to know and feel his misery and its cause.

2. He resolves to forsake all his sins and return to God.

3. He has faith in God, and in his saving love and grace.

4. He confesses his sin. N. B.—Ingenuous confession a necessary mark and fruit of saving repentance.

5. He casts himself entirely upon the merits and grace of Christ, and on the truth of God's word. He casts himself on the mercy of God in trust and hope.

6. He submits entirely to God—is willing to be and to do anything.

7. He puts all these pious thoughts and purposes in practice, without delay—instantly.

(1.) He does not wait to dally with sin.

(2.) He does not wait to make himself better, but comes as he is.

How can you free yourself from guilt, or from depravity, or from their consequences, but by coming to Christ?

8. He was instantly received, as he was, while yet a great way off.

(1.) His first efforts were graciously met and seconded. The gracious Father had eyes and bowels and feet and hands and lips of love.

(2.) He is fully pardoned and restored.

(3.) He is invested with Christ's righteousness—the robe.

(4.) He is renewed by the Holy Spirit—the ring.

(5.) He is filled with joy and peace—the fatted calf.

(6.) There is joy at his repentance—they began to be merry.

## SERMON XXII.

# The Parable of the Unjust Steward.

LUKE XVI. 1–9.

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This is a most difficult parable, and various interpretations have been given of it. Some of these interpretations it may be proper briefly to state.

(1.) That it represents Christ himself—strange view.

(2.) That it represents Judas and Pilate—absurd view.

(3.) Represents publican and rich man—futile.

(4.) Represents penitent sinners devising repentance—untenable.

(5.) Teaches to make friends among the rich and great—mean view.

I will not spend time in considering these interpretations in detail—this would be tedious. I will not spend time in refuting them—this would fatigue both you and me. Nor will I parade laborious research and critical acumen in solving difficulties—I have

always avoided this. But I will go straight on with what I believe, upon a protracted examination, to be the true exposition.

1. The key-word of the parable is found in the eighth verse: "And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely; for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

2. The object had in view in the framing of the parable is stated in the ninth verse: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." The thing commanded to be done is "to make friends."

3. The manner of doing this is stated in verses one to eight.

4. He commended the "wisdom" or "prudence" of the unjust steward. The word should be *prudence*, not wisdom. Wisdom is ever connected with moral goodness—cunning with the low and the base. But *prudence*, providence or forethought, is the true and proper force of the word. And thus it is repeatedly used in the Septuagint version of the Scriptures.

5. Observe, he did not commend the man's *dishonesty*, but his *prudence*. An action or a character has often two sides to it, viewed on one of which it is commendable, and on the other is to be reprobated. A bold, bad man may, in the performance of wicked acts, exhibit admirable courage and energy. The devil has his martyrs, who endure great labor and make great sacrifices in his cause. It is right to point out their conduct to Christians, in order to stimulate them to greater diligence. Such argu-

ments are commonly used when national, political or sectarian strifes run high. We may say to the free men of the North, See how slavery seeks to spread into the territories, and shall you be idle?* We may say, See how Rome seeks to proselyte, and shall you do nothing? See how other denominations establish literary institutions, and shall you remain supine? In all these instances, who does not see that we are not praising the *cause*, but the *conduct* of our adversaries? How often have I used the same line of argument in the pulpit? How often have I singled out some gay young lady of pleasure and fashion, and bid you notice with what pains she adorned her person in order to please and attract in the drawing-room; and from thence argued how diligent you ought to be in arraying yourselves for the splendid assemblies of heaven? How often have I taken men's diligence in acquiring temporal wealth as an argument to show how diligent you should be in acquiring the true riches! And now this is the very thing done by the parable under consideration. It is true indeed that Julian, and after him very many, even down to our own times, have represented this parable as commending the *immorality* of the unjust steward. But it is as plain as the sun in the heavens that it is only his *prudence*, his provident forecast for the future, which is commended.

6. Come we then to notice his prudence—the thing here so highly commended. Prudence implies caution in deliberating and consulting in regard to the most suitable means to accomplish valuable pur-

* This sermon was prepared in 1854.—Ed.

poses, and sagacity in discerning and selecting them. It also implies promptness and resolution in carrying our plans into execution. All this was most beautifully exemplified in the conduct of the unjust steward. The thing to be secured was worldly competence and comfort, and it was not possible for him to have planned or acted more wisely.

(1.) He was in a critical condition, and he fully understood and realized it. He looked his affairs fairly and squarely in the face, with an unblinking eye. If every business man, and every business man's family, would do so, it would save many a respectable family from bankruptcy and ruin. And if every fallen, lost soul would do so, it would save many a one from hell. But the subject is to many an unpleasant one, and so they dismiss it.

(2.) He immediately devises the most suitable measures to meet his case and gain his end. He could not dig and was ashamed to beg; hence he adopted the preferable arrangement of laying his friends under obligations to himself by signal acts of kindness.

(3.) He instantly set about the prompt and vigorous execution of his plan.

7. The prudence of the steward, both in counsel and conduct, was perfect and successful. And now Christians should imitate it.

(1.) For like him we are stewards. We are stewards of all we possess—of all our gifts and graces; of all our intellectual faculties, and learning, and eloquence; of all our children and households; of all our wealth; of all we are or have.

(2.) Like him, we are to give an account for all.

(3.) Like him, we have it in our power so to use these things as to make them conducive to our eternal welfare. Verse nine: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." The mammon of unrighteousness means the false, unreal mammon. The original word sometimes has this force, and this is its force here, as is evident from the eleventh verse, where it is contrasted with the true riches. Still it may be called the unrighteous mammon, because it is hardly possible to get and retain great worldly wealth without contracting more or less guilt along with it. Or it may be so called because of a deeper sense in the word than any yet mentioned, even because of some inherent criminality growing out of the very nature and existence of property. "For in a perfect state of society—in a realized kingdom upon earth—there would be no such thing as property belonging to one man more than another. In the moment of the Church's first love, when that kingdom was for an instant realized, 'all that believed were together and had all things common;' and this existence of property has ever been so strongly felt as a witness for the selfishness of man, that in all ideas of a perfect commonwealth —which, if perfect, must of course be a Church as well as a State—from Plato's down to the Socialists', this of the communion of goods has made a necessary condition. So that though the possessor of the wealth, or those who transmitted it to him, may have fairly acquired it, yet it is not less this '*unrighteous*' mammon, witnessing in its very existence as one

man's and not every man's, for the corruption, and fall, and selfishness of man—for the absence of that highest love, which would have made each man feel that whatever was his was also every one's beside, and rendered it impossible that a *mine* and *thine* should ever have existed. With all this, we must not of course forget that the attempt prematurely to realize this or any other little fragment or corner of the kingdom of God, apart from the rest—the corruption and evil of man's heart remaining unremoved, and being either overlooked or denied—has ever been one of the most fruitful sources of the worst mischiefs in the world."*

Having then seen what is meant by the mammon of unrighteousness, viz: our possessions, whatever they may be, but especially our property—we return to the proposition that "it is in our power so to use these things as to make them tell upon our everlasting destinies;" so to use them that when we fail—when we die—they shall receive us into everlasting habitations. Verse nine.—Not that it can prepare those habitations for us, or take us thither—only the righteousness and mediation of Christ can do that. But the habitations being prepared, and we being removed thither, our state and standing there will be mightily affected by the manner in which we shall have acquitted ourselves of our stewardship here. We may now so use the resources put by Providence into our hand as to make friends and joys that will welcome us into heaven. Those Christians, to whom and for whom we do good here, will meet us

* Trench.

at heaven's gates and welcome us home. With warm hearts they will remember our kind offices in their behalf, and cling to us with eternal gratitude and perfect love—a love of peculiar intensity and beauty —a love which even in that perfect state, where all is love, shall, nevertheless, throb with a deeper gush, and beam with a brighter eye, at the mention of our name. And if human friendships are sweet to human souls even here on earth, where all love is so imperfect, and mingled with so much alloy, what must be the surpassing and transporting sweetness of this love in heaven? If a philanthropist is sufficiently repaid by the grateful tears and murmured blessings of those whom he has relieved on earth, what shall he enjoy as he bathes in the perennial outgush of those grateful hearts in heaven, who are indebted to him as the human instrument of their salvation?

Never a good deed have you done to a child of God; never a kind word spoken to him or for him; never a sincere prayer breathed in his behalf at a throne of grace; never a single sacrifice of time, or money, or toil, or care, made in his behalf, which will be forgotten in heaven by those for whom these services were performed here on earth. Whether they are grateful here or not, they will be grateful there; whether they love you or hate you, bless you or curse you now, be sure they will give earnest thanks to you then. At present they may not know to whom they are indebted, and may be ignorant of the favors conferred, and of how much they cost the giver; here they may mistake your character, mis-

judge your motives, dislike your services, and return you hatred for your love. But patience, Christian philanthropist, all this will speedily pass away, like the morning mist. Not a good thought, word or deed of yours toward the pious, from first to last, shall ever be forgotten, or coldly remembered by them in the eternal world. They shall be written as with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond, and graven upon glad and grateful hearts forever. Patience and perseverance, Christian, in your works of faith and labors of love to all men, but especially toward the household of faith. They will remember and requite you for it all, one day soon. Go on! Go on! thou man of God, in your self-denying and unrequited toil. "To him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward."* Go on! Go on! You are making friends, everlasting friends, with this mammon of unrighteousness. Not a single Bible or missionary you send to the benighted heathen; not a single tract or preacher you send to the neglected among our home population; not a single child or sinner you gather into the Sabbath-school, prayer-meeting or church, and become instrumental in converting and saving, but secures another and another friend, who will receive you with songs of joy, and hearts of love, and shouts of welcome into everlasting habitations in heaven. The gifts you bestow on Christ's poor ones now, especially if you have to deny yourselves in order to be able to bestow them; the weary midnight hours you spend in waiting around their sick-beds, ministering to them in their

* Proverbs xi. 18.

hour of need; all your consolatory visits to their houses of mourning; all your words of encouragement in their hour of gloom, and your words of counsel in their hour of perplexity—all these, and all other words and deeds of mercy, charity and love will be remembered then. Can they be forgotten by a sinless soul, whose memory is perfect? Can they be remembered coldly by a sinless soul, whose love and gratitude are perfect? Has not the imperfect gratitude of imperfect men, even in this life, often repaid the Christian philanthropist for great and painful sacrifices? Have not the blessings and grateful tears of widows and orphans, that were ready to perish, often filled the souls of good men, even in this life, with a serene and lofty joy that earth's conquerors and emperors might envy? What then, oh tell me, what then shall be the perfect joys of heaven? For it is not possible that these favors shall be forgotten in heaven; and, being remembered, it is not possible that they shall not make the pulse of the happy recipient throb with vigorous gratitude and love toward their proper object. Nor is it possible that the once toil-worn, but now glory-crowned philanthropist, should receive unmoved these pure, deep outgushings of warm, grateful and unchanging hearts.

Nor can it be that we err, Christians, in presenting this as a motive to sustain and quicken your resolutions and your efforts in every good work. It is an inducement which God himself holds out to encourage and stimulate you. He has told you that "to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward; that he, who, in bearing precious seed,

goeth forth with tears, shall enjoy a harvest-time of gladness; that he, who soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and that they, who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars forever and ever."* And some of the greatest and holiest of men, in the midst of the severest trials and sorrows, have found their resolution and their energies sustained and quickened by this very consideration. It was so with Paul. Hungry and thirsty, cold and weary, slandered, hated and reviled, exiled, hunted and persecuted, he still persisted in his heavenly work of hunting up souls and winning them to glory. It was one of the secrets of his indomitable energy and deathless perseverance that every soul he saved would be to him a garland of glory. "For what" (says he) "is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."† Why did he take so deep an interest in the perseverance and final salvation of his converts? Why, when storms and trials rose around them, and threatened to overpower their faith and patience, did he brave everything, and fly from city to city, and from country to country, like an omnipresent agency, that he might reanimate and rally their faltering spirits? I say what sustained him amid these almost superhuman labors and sufferings, except that glorious hope to which he himself alludes in one of his most touching appeals: "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown,

* Proverbs xi. 18. Psalm cxxvi. 6. 2 Corinthians ix. 6. Daniel xii. 3. † 1 Thessalonians ii. 19.

so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."* Whatever were the mighty motives, the glorious hopes with which he sustained *them;* a chief motive, which enabled *him* to do so much and endure so much in their behalf, was that they were his "joy and crown."

It is sweet to a gray-haired sire, who has devoted his hours and his energies to the education of his children, and to making a comfortable provision for them, to be surrounded by those children in the evening of his days; to see them honor their education by a virtuous and honorable life, and to read in their every look and act that they gratefully revere and honor the sire who has loved them so purely and so well. It is sweet to the patriot, who has stood in the gap, in the hour of his country's danger, who has served her faithfully through many dangers, and with many sacrifices, to find when his work is done, and his life is drawing to a close, that he has a place in the hearts of his countrymen; that they revere his person, love his name and cherish his memory. What then shall be the gratitude of the child, and what the joys of the Christian parent, who has taught and trained his child for heaven, when he meets it there? And what the joys of such men as Paul, and Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin, and Knox, and Whitefield, and Chalmers, and Payson, and Judson, when the songs of unnumbered multitudes, like a shout of nations, breaks forth from the opening gates of heaven, to hail their advent thither—these being the songs of a grateful

* Philippians iv. 1.

love that shall never change, or ebb, or die—a love that shall throb on unconsumed and immortal, through the endless years of heaven? And though we may not all be permitted to receive so vast honors and joys, yet what shall be the joy of that poor man, who, as he climbs those lofty steeps and enters those pearly gates, is met by some shining spirit, once a debased Hindoo or Hottentot, and is informed that it was the Bible sent by him that guided the feet of this sinner to the hills of heaven? Or what shall be the joy of that young girl, or aged man, who is so soon to meet in glory some little child gathered by them into the Sabbath-school, and converted and saved?

It is thus that of the mammon of unrighteousness you make friends who shall hereafter receive you into everlasting habitations. Nor is this all. You not only make friends of those whom you are instrumental in saving, but you deepen also the friendship and love of the angels, who are your invisible co-laborers in this great work. Yea, more—you deepen and endear your friendship with God. He will ever shower sweeter smiles upon you from his loving countenance; ever dart upon you brighter beams from his love-lit eyes; ever wreathe your brow with lovelier laurels; fill your cup with a sweeter draught; clothe your form with more heavenly beauty; fill your spirit with a sweeter rapture; and set your throne more toweringly aloft, for having thus acquitted yourself of your stewardship. In Matthew xxv. 34–40 we have the clew to this parable, and the proof of what we have uttered. There are many

other texts of kindred character. Who does not remember the declaration that "he that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward?"* Who, among all those who employ themselves and their substance in the service of the Master, has forgotten the declaration: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister?"† Or who, with the heart of a Christian, can forget the Scripture: "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased?"‡ To whom does not the parable of the pounds at once recur? Luke xix. 12–27.

But, above all, let it be borne in mind that a faithful discharge of our stewardship on earth is necessary, not only to a high degree of glory, but to the enjoyment of glory at all. An unfaithful steward—one who wastes his Master's goods, or, what is the same thing, one who embezzles them to his own use, regardless of the wishes and the interests of the Master—can not be saved at all. Mark well the tenth and eleventh verses: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

* Matthew x. 41. † Hebrews vi. 10. ‡ Hebrews xiii. 16.

## SERMON XXIII.

# The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

LUKE XVI. 19–31.

(*First Sermon.*)

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There has been much discussion whether this is a parable or a description. I suppose it a parable; but you will recollect that in our previous discourses a parable has been shown to differ from a fable in this, that its imagery either had, or, in the opinion of those to whom it was addressed, was supposed to have, a real existence. Thus it is in the parables we have already passed over. Instances may be found in every one—the Tares, the Sower, the Supper, the Vineyard, the Rich Fool, the Lost Sheep, etc. I have said a parable has, or, in the estimation of those to whom it is addressed, may have, an existence. This remark is important, for two reasons, in the interpretation of the parable under consideration, especially in that part of it, in which departed souls are represented as having con-

versation with each other in different states. It was the opinion of the ancients, that Hades, the place of departed spirits, was separated into two apartments—one for the abode of the good, the other for the bad—and that these apartments were separated from each other by a "chasm," utterly impassable, to be sure, but at the same time so narrow, that with their enlarged powers, they could see and converse with each other.

Now, this opinion is no doubt partly true; perhaps entirely so. But it is manifest that, in the parable, it is not designed to be either affirmed or denied. The Savior had been speaking of the propriety of "using the things of this world, as not abusing them," and although diverted for a while from this subject, he here returns to it, and the more to enforce the lesson he had taught, the more to create and confirm the impression that we ought to make all things subordinate to our eternal interests, by using them to promote the glory of God, he brings forward this parable. One remark more: parables are not designed to *teach* doctrines, but to illustrate them. There are several truths not here formally and for the first time made known, but which are assumed as undoubted verities.

It will be the business of these discourses to notice these and dwell upon them, so as to prove them where they are in doubt, and, when established, to derive those practical lessons from them which naturally follow.

One of the most difficult problems presented to the human mind is to reconcile the present state of

things with the existence of a holy, wise, good and powerful First Cause, especially to reconcile his being and providences with the present condition of man. And if we altogether pass by that most mysterious of all problems, the origin and entrance of Evil among men, still there remains another, which to the naked eye of human intellect is just as inscrutable and just as mysterious. How shall we reconcile the many miseries of the righteous and the sometimes many pleasures of the wicked, with the doctrine of the presence and the presidency of a Being, who is almighty, just and good? The inequalities in this life are manifestly very great, and this, too, irrespective of the character and conduct of men. You will find of one, that like the rich man of our text, he is born a prince in the earth; a man of vast mental and physical powers and accomplishments; whose every bone, nerve and ligament are permeated and steeped in a silvery flood of life and health and animation; whose every sense drinks gladly and greedily in the melodies and the sweets and the beauties and the grandeur of nature, as they flow unto him in every direction. The landscape spreads its blooming meads and waving fields; it lifts up its dim and smoky hills; it rears aloft its hoary cloud-girdled mountains; it purls its gently flowing streams, and winds its majestic rivers, as if on purpose to fill his eye with the transporting, the beautiful, the sublime. The air hurries away from the blooming beds of fragrant flowers, that it may bathe his pulsing temples, and pour at once upon his enchanted ear the melodies of nature. The earth

and the sea and the air heap their treasures upon him. The north gives up its furs, the south its fruits, the hills give up their vines, and the vales their corn; every country and every clime seem to emulate each other in bestowing their luxuries upon him. And to these many sources of sensitive enjoyment is superadded a mind of the highest and happiest order, with which to range over the vast domains of fancy and of fact, and cull the flowers and pluck the fruits of intellectual delight, which bloom and ripen everywhere.

Such is this man, and far more; while another born at his very door is, in physical and intellectual condition, the very reverse of all this. He is an heir of poverty, sickness and pain. He is a man against whom the Almighty seems to have raised his hand and leveled his arrows, until in the bitterness and wretchedness of his soul, he cries out, "My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life! I loathe it; I would not live alway: let me alone, for my days are vanity. . . . Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave?"*

Wide, my hearers, is the difference between the types we have held up for your consideration! Widely has *God* made them to differ. These are the Lord's doings, and they are wondrous in our eyes. These are the "Rich Man" and the "Laza-

* Job vii. 15, 16; iii. 20–22.

rus" of our text. The poor Lazarus is a saint, a man who hates sin and loves holiness and fears God. A man amiable in disposition, mild and gentle; humble in his manners and unimpeachable in his whole deportment. Whilst the other, the "Rich Man" of the parable, is sensual and selfish; proud and arrogant; vain and impious.

Now the problem, which unassisted reason in the state of its best development has been unable to solve, is simply this: How can it consist with the righteous government of a holy and Almighty God, to permit his holy, hidden ones thus to pine, to languish and suffer, while the rebellious contemners of his authority, the monstrous oppressors of their race, are not unfrequently permitted to pass their time away in the midst of unruffled prosperity? The difficulties of this question have led some to deny his providence and others to doubt his existence. This was the thing which so sorely puzzled Job, the patient Job, in the midst of his afflictions. "Wherefore" (says he) "do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?"* This is that which so puzzled the inspired Asaph, that he well-nigh hesitated, whether it was either his interest or his duty to remain any longer the servant of the Most High?† He was ready to doubt the existence of a Being whose power upheld and whose providence controlled the affairs of men.

Now we know of no better way in which satisfactorily to disperse the gloom of thick darkness, which folds its heavy mantle over the whole of this

* Job xxi. 7. † Psalm lxxiii. 1–16.

subject, than to shed the light from above upon it. Let the rays of the Sun of righteousness shine upon it, and instantly all is clear. A future state of existence shall rectify the seeming disorders of this. Of the one it shall be said, "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things. Thou didst receive a full reward and more, for all the materially good things done by thee, whilst for a time the hand of vengeance stayed itself."

Of the other it will be said, "Thou in thy lifetime didst receive a fatherly infliction for thy transgressions, whilst, for a time, thy works and thy patience and thy charity seemed to be overlooked. But this dispensation was not meant to be final, and hence thou art comforted while he is tormented."

Accordingly, a principal assumption in the parable is this: "The soul is immortal, and in a future state the good shall be comforted and the wicked tormented." This proposition might properly be divided into two, of which the one should assert the immortality of the soul, and the other the rewards and punishment of the future state.

Let us then briefly confirm the truth in our text—the immortality of the soul, a theme of grand and thrilling interest—a proposition involving consequences of momentous and endless importance to every individual of our race. "To be or not to be?" To travel in a sunny, flowery path, which brightening in the indescribable enchantment of its beauty, leads the whole of the endless prospective; or to struggle through a narrow, memphitic, tortuous

passage shortly and suddenly ending in a darkness which is eternal.

These are some of the consequences which the question brings pregnant before us—a question, which, as before stated, is too high for our limited comprehension. Shall our being continue or be extinct? Shall these longings for immortality, for a higher and happier state of being, be gratified, or are they doomed to everlasting disappointment? The almost universal persuasion of mankind, that they in this life only entered the vestibule of existence, and that death is only a door-way leading into the temple of being and life—is it well-founded, or is it only a pleasing, splendid delusion? These mental and moral faculties of ours, endowed, we fondly think, for endless advance, for everlasting elevation—are they destined to make never-ending improvement, or are they, after a brief, and, so to speak, chrysalis existence, to droop beneath the frosts of death, and wane and wither away into utter and everlasting extinction, like some beauteous flower, whose tinted, downy petals inclose the germ of some precious fruit, when stricken by an untimely frost?

Questions these which men can never solve.

1. They can not prove that such is the destined end of mind. No man has ever seen the soul extinguished. None have ever heard it give up the ghost. We may doubt its continued existence; we may fear its final extinguishment; but beyond this we can not go. To arrive at a certainty of annihilation is impossible.

2. Neither do I think we can, assisted by naught but nature's light, certainly know that the soul shall live forever. Much may plausibly be argued on this point—much has been said—but when it is all told, and best told, it has never succeeded in removing most harassing doubts from the minds of those best able to think, to reason and decide. After all the most vigorous exertions of the cleverest, most candid and profound minds, they have been led to exclaim:

> "Will Spring never visit the moldering urn?
> Will day never dawn on the night of the grave?
> Shall I, alone, be left abandoned in the dust,
> When Spring, relenting, lets the flowers revive?
> Shall Nature's voice to man alone unjust, bid
> Him, though doomed to perish, hope to live?"

I know what has been said, and plausibly said, on the subject of immortality. But beyond a pleasing probability human reason can not go. It can not bring forward a decision so authoritative and final as to dispel our doubts, and hush our fears, and quiet our anxieties. And for this reason, viz: we are as dependent on God for the continuation of our existence as for the beginning of it. Should the Almighty withdraw his sustaining, upholding power, then would we be, as though we had never been. The question, then, "Shall we live forever?" resolves itself into another, "Does God propose that we shall? Does he intend always to continue our existence?" This question can never be settled beyond dispute by any *a priori**

* From cause to effect—ED.

reasonings about the nature or the properties of the soul. Whether it be spiritual or whether it be material it can not exist unless upheld by him, and it can not cease to exist unless he wills it so. It is manifest, therefore, that when we have proved the soul to be material, or proved it to be spiritual, we have not advanced a single step in proving either its mortality or its immortality. After all, we must go back and seek the resolution of the other question, "What has God determined concerning this thing, and has he revealed that determination to us? If so, when and where? I look around me—I find a book which professes to be a revelation of his mind and will upon the points which it handles. I, as in duty bound, examine its vouchers and find them more than sufficient—I find the evidences in behalf of its divine origin so perfect and so conclusive as to force my unhesitating and entire assent. I find, upon full and fair examination, that I can no more doubt this book to be a veritable revelation from God than I can doubt my own existence. Satisfied on this head, I examine its contents, and there find that it is the purpose of God that my soul shall be immortal. My doubts are dissipated, my anxieties quieted, my fears dispelled. I find that *Jesus Christ abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.* I will not abuse your patience, nor insult your intelligence, by offering to prove that the Scriptures teach the doctrine of a future and endless existence. This by common consent is conceded.

But there are questions connected with this one

which are yet untouched, and which it may be well enough in passing to notice—as whether the soul is material or immaterial—whether it dies with the body and with the body will be revived at the resurrection; or if after death it retains a separate and conscious existence until the resurrection. These are still open questions, to be decided in the same way with the preceding. I have, in a previous parable, investigated this subject, and here need do no more than repeat results. To do so, then—the Scriptures decide that the soul is a spiritual being, different from, but being an inmate of, the body; that, at death, it is separated from it; but that it does not die, become extinct or disorganized, but retaining its being and its activity, immediately passes into another state, of enjoyment or pain, according as it had in this world been interested or uninterested in the salvation through Jesus Christ. Such is the doctrine assumed in the parable. This is the truth assumed in the language of our Savior to the repentant thief, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise."* This was what led Paul to desire a release from this wearisome, troublesome world; even that he might depart and be with Christ Jesus, "Which was far better."† This was what encouraged the sweet singer of Israel, as he went down into the valley of the shadow of death, and while its dark, sluggish waters swept heavily over him, even that he was going to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. This it was which elevated the very rudest and meanest of the dying martyrs

* Luke xxiii. 43. † Philippians i. 23.

to the highest pitch of moral heroism, and called forth shouts instead of groans, and songs instead of tears. And, finally, this has always been the faith of the holy Catholic Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, in all countries and in all past duration. With so many unequivocal declarations there ought to be no doubt concerning what the Bible has revealed upon these questions. It asserts them time and again; and as there is no fact in nature which does not entirely harmonize with this view, and as there is the best possible evidence for believing the Bible to be the word of God, there is an end to discussion. If my assumption, that the Scriptures are inspired, be true, my conclusion is unavoidable. And I can not refrain from remarking that it is as encouraging, as it is unavoidable. It is a conclusion which meets and satisfies the desires of the soul. Nothing is more distressing than the thought of annihilation!—than the thought that our existence, after a few short and troubled years, is destined to abrupt extinguishment. Blot out this glorious truth from the catalogue of verities and of human faith, and the exclamation of the poet will spring with melancholy spontaneity from every breast:

> "Whence springs this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
> This longing after immortality?
> Or whence this secret dread, this inward horror,
> Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
> Back on herself, and startles at destruction?"

But no! this desire is not destined to an everlasting blight. Our lamp is not ordained to go out in obscure and endless darkness; but it shall burn

brighter and brighter until it shall shine in the upper firmament as a star, forever and ever. These god-like powers of mind shall not be nipped by the frosts of death, when they have but just begun to expand their blooming petals to the air and sunlight of heaven. These deep and earnest longings after intellectual food shall yet be gratified, when, stationed upon some bold, bald promontory, which lifts aloft its reverend head high above the common level, in yon "bright center" of the universe, we shall look far out upon the deep blue ocean of surrounding space, and take in, with the power of a seraph's vision, the vast variety of suns and moons and stars and systems, which lie spread out, in a divinely magnificent and orderly confusion, around the great, eternal, topless, boundless throne. And wider and wider shall be the range of vision, because more and evermore shall our spirit powers expand, and higher and higher shall the wings of spirit soar far up above the heights untrodden yet by angel's feet, "and be at home where angels yet still bashful look."

Great God! I thank thee for my being. I glorify thy Name and Son, that thou hast deigned to vouchsafe to me, a weak and mortal man, to me, a vile and rebel worm, immortal life, eternal joys and an ever-progressive elevation—even high up along those speechless heights of glorious being, which are as yet unreached by angel's wing, as yet unsoiled by seraph's feet. O Father! it is true, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have

entered into the heart of man, the things thou hast prepared for them that love thee."*

Now we can understand, my brethren, why Moses, under the influence of the Spirit of God, chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.† Now we can understand how Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Elijah, and David, and the host of patriarchs and prophets, those pilgrims and strangers in the earth, whose sorrows were multiplied, whose days were evil and few, have at last received the fulfillment of those exceeding great and precious promises, which had been given for their encouragement in the land of their pilgrimage. Now we see how those holy, heroic martyrs, who "were oppressed on every side, distressed, cast down; who had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments; who were tempted and were slain with the sword; who wandered in deserts and mountains, being destitute, afflicted, tormented;"‡ we know, now, I say, that they were wise, and that they are rewarded. We see that eventually there is no hurt in holiness—that there is great gain in godliness. We can see now, how Paul, even when of all men it made him the most miserable, could still hold on to Christianity and glory in the cross—how he could cheerfully suffer the loss of all things, yea, count his most precious possessions as filth, that he might glory in the cross of Christ.

These reflections lead to a second remark: The

* 1 Corinthians ii. 9. † Hebrews xi. 25. ‡ Hebrews xi. 36-39.

assurance of a future state ought to have a mighty influence upon our affections and conduct. The things which are seen are temporal, but those that are not seen are eternal. The providences of God which follow us here, whether pleasing or painful, so far as they relate merely to our present life, ought not to be the objects of either great desire or dread. A little while, and the pleasures and pains of the present state shall have no existence; our possessions and pursuits shall be numbered with the things that were.

You have dragged out a life of labor and sorrow, of disease and disappointment, of penury and pain, for threescore years and ten. Regard it not. One step more and you are at home; one effort, one endurance more, and you shall soon forget all, in your perfect and everlasting rest, your unending heaven.

Or you have danced away the rosy, reeling hours of fourscore years in frolic and frivolity, and gay and splendid dissipation, amid the circles of the sensual and selfish; and where now are those frothy joys and fleeting hours? They are gone. They have evaporated. They have vanished into smoke. Have left no permanent value or pleasure behind. The feathery footsteps of those withered years have not left a single trace of bliss upon the soul. Life to you has been a miserable empty dream—a hollow dream. And now you must lift up your eyes in hell, and shall beg imploringly, and beg in vain, for some little alleviation of your misery, for a little drop of water to cool your parched and blistered tongue! Oh, that men were wise; that they would

live as become an immortal race; that they would secure the one thing needful; that they would live for heaven!

If you were agoing to remove from your native country, to make your permanent residence in a strange and distant land, would you not seek out all the available information concerning your future home? Would you not set your affairs in order? Would you neglect any known and necessary precaution or preparation? Aye, all this would you do to make yourself comfortable in your future home, even though, in the course of nature, it is to be your home only for a short time! And how much more then should you be solicitous about your eternal home beyond the grave! Oh, that men were wise; that they would know this; that they would consider their latter end!

## SERMON XXIV.

# The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

LUKE XVI. 23–26.

*(Second Sermon.)*

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Men are mortal; they soon die They come forth into existence upon the surface of a material world, exist a while, then pass away; and the living muscle, and the blooming cheek, and the beaming eye are palsied and withered in death. Their days pass like a shadow! Man goeth to his long home, and where is he? Our life is as a vapor, which appears for a moment, and is caught, and tossed, and whirled in the storms of human passion, and then vanishes away. Everywhere we walk over the ashes of the dead; and when a few more years are past and gone, we, too, shall cease to exist and act upon the busy, exciting theater of time. Our pursuits and passions shall lie forgotten in the grave. The ringing laugh and bounding footfall of merry youth, and the sterner struggles of manhood's fiercer passions; the shouts

and songs of gladness, the sobs and wails of sorrow, shall mingle their varied and discordant sounds above the place where sleeps the unconscious ashes of him who speaks and those who hear to-day. Deep and quiet is the sleep of death! Dark and chill are the gloomy, narrow vales of the grave! And is this the final destiny of man? So the atheist tries to dream, but we have proved the contrary. We have shown that at death the soul is separated from the body; that it passes into another state of being; that in that state its condition corresponds with what was its character here; that at the end of the world the dead will be raised, the living changed, and our race judged; and that our everlasting state shall be decided according to the strictest rules of right. Those who have done well shall receive glory, honor and immortality; and those who have done ill shall perish forever. We shall not now stay to prove what we have shown so often, that for the impenitent there is allotted a future and everlasting punishment in hell. Let us rather inquire what the Scriptures reveal concerning it.

Is it indeed true, then, that after our brief existence here upon earth, very many of us, for our crimes and rebellions against the God who made us, and would have saved us, must pass away from this panorama of beauty and grandeur, into a dark, burning and everlasting hell — amid the worm, and the fire, and the devils, and the damned, to wail away a wearisome eternity of woe? And what is more astonishing still, shall this be the case although men might avoid it—even though

they are besought in every way to turn and live? Surely, my hearers, you either do not believe that there is a hell, or you have a very partial and mistaken idea of the unspeakable reality of its horrors, else your behavior would be far different from what it is! Let us then endeavor to look, through the glass of revelation, into that dark and gloomy region to which you seem determined to travel, and in which you seem to be determined to make your abode, notwithstanding all the efforts made to dissuade you from it. And may the eternal, light-giving and sight-giving God grant you to-day such a view of it as shall induce you to turn away your feet from the broad road which leads to death; as shall induce you to flee from the wrath to come, and seek and secure a shelter under the shadow of the wings of the Eternal!

Before entering upon Scripture investigation, I will be permitted to premise, and you will be careful to remember, that many of the expressions with which we shall meet in the Scriptures are metaphorical. Figures of speech are the result of imperfections of human language, or of human conception. When these fail, we resort to figures of speech to make up the deficiency. Human language is God's chosen vehicle, through which he conveys to us a revelation of his performances, and of his, as yet, unexecuted purposes. Again, human language is invented for the communication of human ideas. If other ideas than ours are to be expressed, we find that we have neither range to express them, nor capacity adequate to conceive them. This is the

case with much that exists in the spirit-world. Paul heard in the heavenly paradise words which it would neither be lawful nor possible for man to utter. Now because we neither have language to express, nor capacities to conceive the tremendous realities of the future, it follows that the only way by which we can receive knowledge of them at all is by comparison and figures.

To be imprisoned in dismal dungeons; to be tormented evermore; to sink downward, and still downward, from the lowest deep into a still lower depth of darkness, and fire, and brimstone, and torment, in that horrific pit which has no bottom, pursued by the wrath of God and pierced by the deathless worm; to gasp and sink away into the speechless horrors of the second death—and all this forever and ever!

Such are some of the expressions which lie scattered through the word of God, from which we are to gather an idea of the torments of hell. And in them, you will observe, are included the ideas of loss and suffering!

Notice what the rich man lost in hell; what all must lose! They lose both earth and heaven! They who go there leave, like Dives, their wealth and friends, and the pleasure and ease of earth, and the glorious altitudes and beatitudes of heaven. You will lose all those houses, and fields, and possessions for which you are now so careful and painstaking. Naked shall you be driven out of the world, and your gold and silver shall eat as a canker and burn as fire in the prison of hell. Your memory shall

rot and your friends shall be lost. Those among them who were pious, and who watched over and prayed for you; who followed you with entreaty and exhortation, are changed now in nature and estate. The pious parent admonishes no more; the faithful partner entreats no more; and the pious child prays no more that you may turn and live.

Those among your friends, who, like yourselves, followed lying vanities and forsook their own mercies; dead to all those kindly sympathies which blessed you here, and transformed into demons of rage and all unholy passions, no longer bathe your fevered temples, nor chase your trickling tears; but every one of them, like so many furies, gather round you to feed and fan the rising flames of wrath, and draw the scorching cords of justice more tightly around your black, and swollen, and writhing frame. Children, partners, parents, brothers, sisters, friends, neighbors and acquaintances, whom your example helped to ruin, shall then, like millstones fixed around your neck, drag you downward still lower in that gulf of sulphurous flame, and even curse you as the cause or the accomplice of their ruin. Devils, and flames, and storms consume you, since even fondest friends in frantic madness gnash their teeth, and glare with strange and infernal fury upon you! When pain, or fever, or disaster now comes, you expect and receive the consolations of true-hearted, sympathizing friends. If poverty follow on the heels of disaster, how many there are to pity, to help, to lift you, if they can, and set you on your feet again! But now, such of them as were your

companions in guilt, seduced perhaps by you, shall gather round and howl and gnash their teeth, and stamp upon and curse you, and gloat upon you in your agony. Stripped evermore of your purple and fine linen, you shall be clothed in flames, and chains, and darkness! Lifted forever from your downy beds of ease, you shall lie down in everlasting burnings. No more regaled with delicacies, which your riches once procured, you shall be fed with the burning coals of juniper! Caught and whirled from your peaceful dwellings, here you shall dwell in dungeons dark forevermore!

But in this dark abode you not only suffer the loss of wealth and friends, but also of the power of enjoyment. Amid all the sorrows which surround you here, you have many pleasing sensations—those of sense and imagination; the music of the grove, and field, and brook, floating in strains of melody upon the sighing air; the perfume of flowers; the lowing of herds and the bleating of flocks. There are waving fields, and winding streams, and blooming vales, dotted here and there with peasant cottages, sending up their curling smoke like incense to the hoary, everlasting mountain, dim and hazy in the distance. There are the joys, too, of invention and discovery, of investigation and contemplation! There are the pleasures of memory, and the triumphs of hope, and the sweetly painful ecstasies of love. All these you may enjoy in this nether world; but in hell you must part with them all—each—forever and ever! Every aching fiber of the soul which binds you to them shall be suddenly, rudley and forever

snapped asunder. The atmosphere of hell bears other sounds upon its whirling, roaring breath than the melodies of earth. When the last morning of your life here shall have dawned, and your fond, fluttering, failing heart shall have throbbed its last pulse of earthly affection; when your eye has sent its last flash of joy, as it looked out upon "the pomp of hills and garniture of fields," and then closed forever; when your ear shall have caught the last faint echoes of nature's melodies, as they sink and die away along the outmost coast of time; and when, for the last time on earth, you have received the cup of enjoyment from the hand of Science, and then pass away into the land where your wisdom shall be counted foolishness indeed; then shall eye, and ear, and heart, and soul be filled with other and less pleasing objects; with "sights which make the cheeks of darkness pale" to see them; with "sounds which make the knees of terror quake" to hear them; with passions hot, violent, blasting, as the boiling floods of hell; with knowledge of virtue forever lost, and happiness forever gone; with remorse, and death, and dark despair forever preying on the helpless soul! Sad change of objects and emotions! And then—to know no other change forever!

But in counting the punishment of *loss* inflicted on the reprobate, we have not finished when we have recorded the loss of earthly good. It were well indeed if this were all. But the losses, oh how unspeakably more, in the loss of heaven! Of this loss, also, you will be keenly conscious. The rich man, lifting up his eyes from hell, saw Abraham afar

off, and Lazarus in his bosom. He saw this, though they were in heaven. The parable then represents the rich man, though in hell, as conscious of the beatific joys of heaven; as able to gaze into its magnificent plains, and to look upon the transports of its teeming, joyous population. From this we learn that the reprobates have greatly enlarged views of the grandeur of that heaven which they bartered away for the pleasures of sin. And how must this affect your condition? Can it do less than unspeakably aggravate your misery? When you see many come from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and yourselves shut out, through your own folly, into outer darkness, can the sight have other influence than to swell unspeakably your grief, and aggravate your despair?

When you, looking upward, gaze on those regions of light, which lie spread out in all their magnificent grandeur, which befits the residence of royalty divine; when you look upon those plains of everlasting verdure, ringing with songs of never-ceasing melody, watered by the broad and ever-flowing river, and bathed in tides of never-ceasing light; when you see the jasper walls, and golden streets, and pearly gates of the New Jerusalem, and view the beaming eyes, and radiant forms, and burnished crowns, and golden harps of her teeming, joyous population; when you listen to the shout which rings far out among the lofty mountains, and reverberates even down to the very midst of hell, in accents like the sound of many waters, like the sound

of mighty thunderings—Glory to God! Hallelujah! Amen!—when you see and hear all this (and if, as many of the best and wisest teachers affirm, you shall carry all the corrupt and tormenting passions within you, to the regions of the second death, unhampered by the restraints imposed upon you in this nether world); and when you shall be given up to the fury of unbounded, malignant activity—how great will be your misery and mortification, when you shall see amid all that bliss not only friends and acquaintances, but also those that you formerly despised and trampled upon, now sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and you yourselves thrust out into burning, outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth—where the worm dieth not, where the soul rests not, where peace and ease exist not, and where hope never enters!

Here is a point upon which I want you to dwell. I have so spoken of your losses, when you lose heaven and earth, that you understand me to teach that these constitute a very material part of future punishment; but I should like you to understand also that another great element of that dire retribution will consist of the unrestrained and agonizing activity of those appetites and passions which are not mortified in this world, but, on the contrary, are nourished and cherished. These, we think, are included in the Scriptures under the metaphor of the worm that never dies. It is taken from one of the most disgusting and dreadful afflictions which it is possible to suffer here. To be eaten up alive by worms, generated in the black, fetid, festering flesh,

and which make a nauseating carnival upon the very flesh they feed on, is one of those awful ends which God in mercy but rarely brings upon our rebel race. But nauseating and disgusting as it is, it is for that reason selected as the most fitting emblem of the punishment which shortly awaits all of you that refuse to flee from the wrath to come, at the hands of those very passions which you are now nourishing into vigor and activity. For not more surely do the worms riot in the putrid sore they breed in, than will ambition, pride, envy, carnal sensuality, and every other malignant passion and unholy appetite, riot in uninterrupted, unwearied and unending activity upon the soul and body in which they find a habitation; and the fact that they can never, by any possibility, be gratified in hell, will terribly aggravate the agonies of that fearful place.

In order to realize this point more fully, let us present to you, not the effects of every evil passion (for the limits of a sermon will not admit this), but of one—the passion of anger, resentment or revenge. If we see how it destroys the happiness of both the object and the subject of it; if we see how it seeks the ruin of individuals and families, neighborhoods and nations; or if you turn inward and see how it disturbs the peace and destroys the happiness of your own bosom; how, especially, when unable to gratify itself in the injury of the object of it, it takes sleep from your eyes, and makes you, in the misery of madness, toss and turn in your bed all the weary night; and when you recall how this madness has brought upon you the punishment of parent, over-

seer or ruler; when you recollect how you have been carried away by insane fury upon feeling pain produced by some accident, and how, in frenzy of suffering, you sought to vent your fury on the stick or stone by which you were wounded; then you have before you a faint type of the frantic misery of that fury which shall forever boil and burn along all the channels of sensation, in your soul and body, not only against your fellow-reprobates, who gnash upon you and against the fires and the chains which bind and burn you, but oh!—most horrible of all!—against the God who punishes you! If you hate the man who hurts you now, what insane madness will seize upon you when all the furies of hell shall clutch and crush you? If, when by chance, a stone or stick put you to pain, you have endeavored in your fury to revenge yourself on it, oh! what boiling, blistering, impotent madness shall swell, and dash, and foam through all the regions of your soul and body, against the inanimate and unconscious fires that burn you? But if this be so, what unendurable torture of madness shall your guilty, corrupt soul feel against the God who justly sends these torments upon you? And this inexpressible torture of frantic madness shall be aggravated still more by the conscious certainty that your revenge can never reach nor affect the object it hates. And if it were possible to relent, there might be at least a mitigation of this dire agony; but this can *never* be! Though here at times you may feel some relentings toward God in the intervals of your hate; yet there will be no tears, no regrets, no relenting there! Such fixed and eter-

nal hardness of heart shall have gathered and settled upon your soul, such impenitence and obstinacy, as will never melt, or relent, or submit. Amazing scene of complicated misery and rebellion! A guilty spirit that can not repent! A rebellious spirit that can not submit, that can not relent, even when oppressed and crushed under the hand of a justly incensed Omnipotence! A hardened spirit, which can not melt or yield, but which ever grows harder, even in the awful fires of an everlasting hell!

Behold, the misery which *one* unsanctified passion shall gather upon you. Compute, if you can, the amazing amount. Multiply that by all the other unholy passions of the soul, and then, if you are not stunned or bewildered, shall you be able to catch some faint idea of the misery which shall be heaped upon you by your unholy passions and propensities.

But even this is not all. You make gods of these passions and propensities here; you spend the time, and health, and strength, and wealth upon them, which ought to be spent in advancing the glory of God. These you shall carry with you into hell, where, lacking every object to satisfy them, they will tease and torment you. There will be unsatisfied and raging desires, together with perpetual disappointment and endless confusion, thrown upon all your schemes and efforts to obtain objects to gratify them; and there will be intense and constant misery when you feel eternal hunger and no bread to relieve it, and eternal thirst, without one drop of water to cool your parched tongue; eternal fatigue and weariness, without power to sleep or rest; eternal lust,

withold any hope of gratification. My fellow-men, hear and heed me! Will you not repent and reform while you may? Would it not be better to deny yourselves; to mortify your lusts; to keep the body in subjection, than to strengthen and nourish all these to your eternal torment?

But let us take one step farther, and what do we see more? Passing all the punishments of loss; withdrawing our attention from the sorrows which must, in the nature of things, spring up in the corrupt souls and bodies of lost men; looking no more upon the workings of the deathless worm; if we cast our observations upon the burnings of the quenchless fire; if we look upon the torments you shall everlastingly suffer from devils, and from reprobates of your own race, and from the place and instruments of torture there, and, above all, from the powerful hand of an angry God, we shall not find any alleviation, but a mighty increase in the spectacle of woe which shall present itself for consideration.

As for the place, it is a prison from which escape is hopeless:

"A wall of fiery adamant sprung up—
Wall mountainious tremendous, flaming high,
Above all flight of hope. * * * *
Wide was the place,
And deep as wide, and ruinous as deep.
Beneath I saw a lake of burning fire,
With tempest tossed perpetually, and still
The waves of fiery darkness 'gainst the rocks
Of dark damnation broke, and music made
Of melancholy sort; and over head,
And all around, wind warred with wind, storm howled
To storm, and lightning forked lightning crossed,

And thunder answered thunder, muttering sounds
Of sullen wrath; and far as sight could pierce,
Or down descend in caves of hopeless depth,
Through all that dungeon of unfading fire,
I saw most miserable beings walk,
Burning continually, yet unconsumed;
Forever wasting, yet enduring still;
Dying perpetually, yet never dead.
* * * * * * *
The thunders from above responding spoke
These words, which, through the caverns of perdition
Forlornly echoing, fell on every ear:
'*Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not.*'"

This, this is the kind of a place to which so many of you are hasting as rapidly as time and crime can carry you!

And it were well if even this were all. If, after the conscious loss of heaven and earth, the tortures of passion and appetite, the burning, tossing lake of fire and brimstone, and the gloomy horrors of the roaring winds, and the reverberating thunders of the dark, eternal prison—it were well if this were all. But bear in mind that in every bosom, of all those gnashed, and crisped, and ruined multitudes, there burn the same evil passions and appetites; the same anger, and malice, and wrath, and vengeance, and fury which make your own a pent-up volcano, and that you can not escape from them. You will not be able to avoid your companions in crime, nor those you seduced from the paths of virtue, nor from those you encouraged to acts of sin by your example, and you will have to meet your intimates, your wife and children, your household, whom you did not train up to walk in obedience to God. These,

all frantic with pain, mad with misery, shall wreak their vengeance upon you, as one of the authors of their ruin; and as if your sufferings were too light, while you reel, and stagger, and sink beneath the many and terrible blows of their vengeance, the devils also, blasted by the blazing, bursting bolts of the Almighty, gnashing their horrid jaws, bellowing and roaring in the liquid, fiery flood, they, too, will not be backward in exciting themselves against you. Oh, horrible blindness and perversity of infatuated men! Why will you trample on the body and the blood of Jesus Christ? Why will you scorn the heavenly messengers and madly rush to such a ruin? We have not, even yet, told you the worst. The great, the eternal God himself, shall be your Executioner! "*Tophet is ordained of old. It is deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.*"* And what can be more terrible than when he rises to pour out all his wrath upon you? 'Tis he, who, with great hands of omnipotent vengeance, will chain you in the burning lake, and kindle its fires with seven-fold fury around you, and arm his red right hand with seven-fold horrors against you!

How, O sinners, will your heart endure or your hand be strong when all his stores are opened, and the red-hot firmament of hell shall spout its cataracts of fire upon you? Who knows the power of the wrath of the Almighty? Who can tell the terribleness of his fury, when "*He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest upon the wicked?*"†

* Isaiah xxx. 33. † Psalm xi. 6.

But even if it could be so described as that you might be able to apprehend it, still you could not know it all, until it is added that the whole of this amazing sum of agony and woe must be endured; yea, and ever increased throughout the boundless ages of eternity! Great as is the fall in the beginning, it shall become deeper and deeper. For your prison is a bottomless pit; your vices and depravity will ever grow; your crimes and guilt will ever multiply. It will be so with all your infernal compeers. Hence your ruin and misery will and must ever increase; your pit is and must be a bottomless pit! Oh, horrible abode for the ceaseless ages of eternity!

Now, O my friends, will you not think of this? Why will ye die? For what is it that you risk the awful hazards of an awful eternity? Why will you reject the offered atonement? Jesus offers to save every one of you from this awful end. He died to save you from the second death. In much love to you, when there was no hand that could save, he left the bosom of the Father and suffered the fearful agonies of death, that you might live. Why will you reject him? Is gold or gain, or the pleasures of sin for a season, so pleasant, so precious? Awake, O sleeper! What meanest thou? Yet a little while and your day will be past, and your only hope gone forever. Turn from your sins, and think of and receive Jesus Christ, and close in with the offers and overtures of mercy. Terrible as are the plagues of hell, there is no need that you should endure them. Are you willing to be saved? I am commissioned to ratify the bargain with you all. Will you con-

sent? Oh, do not let another moment pass until you do; you may never have another opportunity.

But you say: "These threatenings are for great sinners. I am not one of these. Surely God will make a difference between them and me." I answer, not such a difference as to save you. It is true, there are degrees of punishment in hell; but in God's sight you are very wicked now; and, remember, your crimes and corruption will ever increase in hell, and the punishment also. See, what a great and unknown evil is in the nature of sin. If the punishments of sin, appointed by a just and holy God, have so much terror in them, how much are sinful men mistaken in the idea they form of the great and blessed God!

How reasonable to believe that such a hell as we have described is prepared for the impenitent, since there are so many appearances of it on earth.

How great a matter of surprise is it that the thousands, and ten thousands, who stand upon the brink of this awful gulf, should be so insensible to it!

## SERMON XXV.

# The Parable of the Pounds.

LUKE XIX. 11–27.

(*First Sermon.*)

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I. *The literal sense.*

The parables are different from fables, in this that they are always founded on some fact in nature or society. Some years before this parable was spoken, Archelaus went to Rome, soliciting a confirmation of his father's will. Rome was a far country. There was a faction in Judea opposed to him. His citizens hated him. They probably sent a delegation to Rome to operate against him. Such things were of frequent occurrence. A similar state of things obtains in this country, when politicians go to Washington, seeking office. The negotiations for office were often tedious and expensive.

Further; it was a thing of frequent occurrence that masters gave their servants money and time, to be employed in business on his account.

II. Difference between this parable and that of the talents. Matthew xxv. 14–30.

1. Difference in time and place. This was spoken by our Savior on his way to Jerusalem, and as he was drawing near the city; that, on Mt. Olivet, three days after his arrival.

2. Difference in audience. This was spoken to the disciples and mixed multitudes of believers and unbelievers; that to the innermost circle of his most select disciples.

3. Difference in scope. This was designed to warn his hearers against the unfounded hope that "the kingdom of God should immediately appear," and to guard them against the disappointment and desertion consequent thereon, and to stimulate his disciples to unflagging fidelity and zeal, by holding before them the recompense of reward.

4. Thus we account for the differences between these twin parables.

III. Spiritual sense.

1. "*A certain nobleman.*" This is Jesus Christ.

2. "*A far country.*" This represents heaven, which is both locally and morally "far," *i. e.*, distant.

3. "*To receive for himself a kingdom.*" Matthew xxviii. 18. 1 Corinthians xv. 23–28. Ephesians i. 20–23.

4. "*And to return.*" Christ's advent at the end of the world.

5. "*Called his ten servants,*" or ten servants of his. These represent professors of religion.

6. "*Delivered them ten pounds.*" Natural and moral endowments—health, strength, fortune, education, social relations, intellectual power, conscience.

7. "*Occupy till I come.*" Employ all these for *me* and for your eternal interests. We are thus taught *that all our gifts and graces, all our opportunities and advantages, both for our own personal culture and for the welfare of others, are a trust committed to us by Jesus Christ, which we are required to use for his glory, and for which we must give an account.* Our learning, skill and influence are all to be employed for the glory of God, and for our own and other's welfare. Our gifts and graces, our opportunities and advantages, the instructions and example of pious parents, the ordinances and good influences which we have enjoyed, have been bestowed upon us not merely for our own improvement and comfort, but to qualify us for doing good to others and for promoting Christ's cause in the world.

IV. The account rendered.

1. "*Thy pound hath gained ten pounds.*" The servant who could say this came with *alacrity and joy.* The "*Dies Ira,*" and many similar hymns represent the day of judgment as a day of terror. This is a false view so far as Christians are concerned. The day will be to them a joyful day. Romans viii. 18–24. 2 Thessalonians i. 7–10. 2 Timothy iv. 8. Hebrews xiii. 17. Revelation xxii. 20.

Let it be observed that all the glory is ascribed to God. "*Thy* pound hath gained ten pounds." So Paul said, "I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." 1 Corinthians xv. 10.

V. The awarding sentence.

1. "*Because thou hast been faithful*"—*faithful*, not successful. Blessed be God for that sentence; for not always the most faithful are the most successful, as judged from the human stand-point; for example, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and our Savior himself.

2. "*Have thou authority over ten cities.*" This is a promise of great promotion in the eternal world. Christians will not all be equal in glory and joy. Not the most successful here will be the most honored there, but the most faithful. The promotion of Christians hereafter will be entirely proportioned to their fidelity here.

(*a*) There will be degrees of glory. Matthew xix. 28. Philippians iv. 1. 2 Corinthians i. 14. Matthew vi. 19, with 1 Timothy vi. 19.

(*b*) Christians will not be rewarded *for* their works. Only the merit of Christ secures heaven.

(*c*) But Christians will be rewarded ACCORDING TO their works. Daniel xii. 3. Romans ii. 6–11. Revelation ii. 26–28; iii. 12, 21. "To him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward." Proverbs xi. 18. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." 2 Corinthians ix. 6.

3. This great promotion will consist in the following things:

(*a*) Higher endowments of body, soul and spirit. All shall be like Christ in nature; but some will be like him a higher degree than others. The most faithful in personal culture and in social duty, and in maintaining a life of holy communion with God,

shall have the highest endowments—shall be the most splendidly furnished for the high employments and enjoyments of heaven.

(*b*) Higher posts of honor, and duty, and joy among the immortals and in the presence of God.

These higher qualities and positions, we may rest assured, will immeasurably tell on the glory of the eternal destiny. In this life we find that difference of gifts and advantages, if all are alike faithful, makes a very wide difference in our earthly lot. By analogy, I suppose, the same ever-increasing differences will be eternally evolving in heaven. Heaven is generally assumed to be a progressive state—from glory to glory. But the degrees of progress will be proportioned to the degrees of endowment at the resurrection. Those who then receive the highest endowments will forever make the greatest progress. But this is analogical and deductive, and I may err. Still, if I am right, what vast, what almost infinite differences will evolve in the progression of the future.

The tables, in many cases, will then be completely turned. Some of those who are now up will then be down, and some of those who are now down will then be up. Some of those who are now weak, and poor and low, but very faithful, will then be strong and rich and high; and some who are now strong and rich and high, but worldly and unspiritual, will then reap as they sowed. They shall be less gloriously endowed at the resurrection, and shall fall farther and farther behind through all eternity.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE ABOVE VIEW.

1. This view contains a very powerful argument for early piety. We should commence young, work hard, and remain steadfast until death. We should give earnest and careful attention to personal culture—mortification of sin, cultivation of holy dispositions, and communion with God.

Youth, I think, in many points sustains the same relation to maturity and old age in this life, that this life sustains to the life to come.

2. This view contains a powerful argument, for instant conversion, in the case of all, old and young.

3. This view is a powerful appeal to Christians to be earnest and persevering. Let us be faithful. Let us deserve this commendation, "*She hath done what she could.*"

## SERMON XXVI.

# The Parable of the Pounds.

LUKE XIX. 12–27.

(*Second Sermon.*)

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*I. The account of the wicked servant.*

1. His character—"thou wicked servant"—malignant or ill-disposed. *Wicked*—not wasteful, not chargeable with outward sins of commission, but of omission; not an atheist, not an idolater, not a corrupter of the truth, not a perjurer, not profane, not a trampler on sacred institutions, not a Sabbath-breaker, not an open violator of any of the precepts of the decalogue; in a word, not a positive but a negative sinner. He had not lived for God, nor for eternity, but had continued in the neglect of the great salvation. Matthew xxv. 31–40. Hebrews ii. 3.

2. The cause of his conduct is to be sought in his mistaken views of the character of God. He regarded God as "*austere*"—severe or cynical; as one who had no pity and no sympathy; as one hard, exacting and cruel, and as destitute of all kindly feeling and generous disposition.

Consequently, he had mistaken views of the character of the work. He looked upon it as all task and drudgery, and no pleasure; as all sacrifice, and no gain. He looked upon the time and strength employed in his Master's services as unprofitable to himself.

Hence there was naught but fear and reluctance—he hid indeed and restored, but employed not his Master's money.

OBSERVATIONS.

1. Hard thoughts of God are natural to man since the fall. The law, but not the gospel, is written on his heart. Genesis iii. 10. Romans ii. 14, 15. It is only by the renewing of the Holy Spirit that we can come fully and truly to believe the gospel. Romans viii. 14–17. John vi. 44, 65. Ephesians i. 17; ii. 8.

2. These hard thoughts of God and of his service are mistaken. He is not austere toward those who seek to serve and please him. It is not true that he is unsympathizing, or that he watches for our halting and waits for our fall. Nor is it true that his service is a hard service, or that he sends any to go a warfare on their own charges. On the contrary, we serve a good Master, who is not exacting, but will reward all our toils and sacrifices a hundred-fold. Matthew xix. 29.

3. We should cherish honorable thoughts of the mercy and grace of God; we should view him as he is revealed in the gospel—good and ready to forgive, rich in mercy to all that call upon him in truth, ready

and mighty to save, ready and rich to reward, and as being the chief end and chief good of the soul.

*II. The judgment of the wicked servant.*

"Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee." Had he been wise and humble, even on his own view, he would have used the Master's gifts in the Master's interests. Had he not combined insolence with hypocrisy he would not have pleaded as he did.

*III. The sentence.*

"Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds." Here is annunciation of a universal law in the divine government established over men. It is often asserted in the Gospels as applying to the moral and spiritual interests of men. But it is not to be confined to those interests; it is of universal application. Matthew xiii. 12. Mark iv. 25. Matthew xxv. 28.

DOCTRINE.

*Use is the condition of increase, and even the condition of continued possession.* This principle is of universal application in God's government of men. It is a law universally operative, both in its natural and its spiritual application. It operates in all the gifts and endowments of Providence.

1. It operates as to our bodily gifts and endowments. Bodily activity is the condition of health and growth, of strength and beauty.

If a limb be not exercised it ceases to grow and ultimately withers, but judicious exercise increases its vigor. If any organ be not exercised it loses the

power to discharge its function, but judicious exercise increases that power. Thus it is with the eye. For instance, the eyes of sailors, and the eyes and ears of savages, in whom these organs, by exercise, acquire increased power. In the case of persons who have lost one sense, their other senses are generally strengthened and sharpened by increased exercise.

These examples suffice to show that exercise is the condition of increase in our bodily powers and organs. But it is also the condition of outward possession. Unless our members and organs be exercised, they waste away and perish. This is illustrated by the fact that the fish in Mammoth Cave, through disuse of their eyes, have become sightless. If the body run below a certain point in vitality and strength it perishes—perishes because it becomes too weak to endure that exercise necessary for its preservation. It can not take food, sleep, air and exercise, and hence dies. But as long as it remains above that minimum point, it is capable of activity, and action increases its power.

2. The same law holds as to mind. Brain not exercised loses its power more and more, and hastens to premature mental and moral decay. But if there be judicious early training, and that training be kept up constantly, vigorously and systematically, there is no ascertained limit to the capacity for increase.

This is seen in early training for some trade or vocation in life. Take two youths of equal age and powers; let them be both put into preparation for the same handicraft or profession; let one be attent-

ive and energetic, and the other listless and torpid —what is the result? The one who is listless and idle learns but little, and disciplines and develops his faculties but little. When he enters upon his calling he has but little power or skill, meets with but indifferent success, and receives but little patronage. This is discouraging—having but little business, he makes no improvement in skill, loses heart, and hope, and comfort in his calling more and more, and soon total discouragement and failure ensue. The other is industrious; his faculties are sharpened and strengthened, and he becomes deft; he enters on his calling with some reputation, and rapidly increases it; skill brings friends and patrons, business and wealth; patronage gives increasing work and wealth; work gives increasing experience and skill; friends, patrons, skill and wealth bring increasing heart and hope; all these act and re-act, each increasing and intensifying the other, until, from age or the abundance of success, further effort becomes unnecessary and is abandoned.

Besides, the patronage which forsook the idle and unskilled rival is attracted to the successful competitor, thus exemplifying the law: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."* Such is the law which obtains in all the walks and vocations of life.

We might illustrate this law in its operations in the higher fields of intellectual labor; in all the walks of learning, and in all the ranges of scientific and philosophic activity. Take two youths—stu-

* Matthew xiii. 12.

dents—gifted with equal powers; as before, let one be active, the other idle. These be the results: The idle student acquires no discipline or development of his powers; his faculties do not grow in sharpness or vigor. Hence to him study is always a task, a drudgery—never a pleasure and an enthusiastic joy. He makes but little progress, achieves no triumphs, gets no honors or rewards. No promotions are in prospect; he is not sought for by the wise and learned; he becomes discouraged more and more; his life is a failure. But the active, steady, persevering student by and by comes to know how to use his powers. Use increases them. More and more rapidly and easily he makes acquisitions. Acquisition brings esteem and influence. Great and kindred minds are drawn around him, and excite, stimulate and aid him. He makes new efforts, acquires increase of power, and learning, and friends, and influence. Being encouraged, he redoubles his efforts, and so his pleasure and success are increased. At length study becomes his meat and his drink, thought and truth his life-blood, and science and philosophy the element in which he lives, and moves, and has his being.

The operation of the same law is seen in the acquisition of *wealth.* "A rich man's wealth is his strong city, but the destruction of the poor is their poverty."* Poverty and riches do each tend to intensify and perpetuate themselves. There is a constant tendency in the very poor to become poorer and poorer, and in the rich to become richer

* Proverbs x. 15.

and richer. The very poor have not the means of physical, intellectual and moral culture, and every accident and sorrow of life is likely to put them lower and lower. On the contrary, great wealth, beyond a certain point, tends to increase more and more, and to fall into fewer and fewer hands. There are two hundred private fortunes in Christendom, which, if those who inherit, shall be able to keep and manage them, will in less than a century swallow all the capital of Christendom and of the whole world.

If society would not have these diverse tendencies to increase until it shall be swallowed up and destroyed by its own ignorant and vicious paupers, it must care for the poor. It must see that its children are not brought up in ignorance and vice—that its orphans and widows and unprotected women be furnished with homes and industrial institutions. There must be children's homes, homes for the friendless and helpless, reformatories for the fallen and for juvenile criminals. Capital must not be permitted to oppress the hireling in his wages. There are palatial residences in all our large cities built of the tears and blood of the unrequited poor. Oh, if those marble halls and those splendidly furnished apartments had only a tongue to tell over, day by day, the tears, and sighs, and agonies of the half-paid laborers, whose ill-requited toil erected them, and if the sad story resounded daily in the ears of the proud and pampered inmates of those lordly mansions, all their pleasures and joys would be turned to gloom, and fear, and despair. But let

them remember, and let them tremble in the remembrance, that there is a just God who sees and hears all things, and who will visit deep and eternal vengeance not only on those who "defraud," but also on those who "oppress" the hireling in his wages. This day* there is more "oppression" of the hireling in the large cities of Christendom than there ever was of the slave in the rural districts of the Southern States a few years ago. This day there is more heart-ache, more hard struggle for life, more lives going prematurely out from sheer exhaustion, among the virtuous laboring poor of our large cities who are "oppressed" in their wages, than there ever were among an equal number of slaves in the agricultural districts. This day, while New York or Boston or Cincinnati are saying to South Carolina, "Let me pull the mote out of thine eye," the other may, in all justice, reply, "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." This by the way.

I proceed to remark that the operation of this law may be seen as clearly in societies as in individuals. Those nations that have civilization and the gospel are constantly rising to higher and higher degrees of wealth, education, science, art, and social, civil, and political power; while the savage and barbarous races are more and more declining and wasting away. The one class have used, and by using have increased, all their endowments and resources; the other have not used them, and are perishing from

* The year 1868—ED.

the earth. For example, the Americans and American Indians, the Anglo-Saxons and American Spaniards, the inhabitants of Europe and the population of Polynesia.

The same thing is exhibited among the various tribes and families of Christendom. A few of the stronger and better tribes and races are swallowing up the others. Four centuries ago we had almost no kingdoms or empires in the modern sense—all was feudalism. Now all is reversed. The better and the hardier tribes absorbed the others and became empires, and the process is still going on. The tendency is to absorption; and it looks as if the Teutonic stock, both in Europe and in this country, would swallow up all the others.

But I weary you with this amplitude of illustration. *The text asserts the law under consideration with a special reference to its bearing on our moral and religious destinies.* In this aspect let us proceèd to consider it. To all God has given moral and religious endowments and advantages, which, if they use and improve, they will increase eternally; and which, if they use and improve not, they shall lose forever.

1. God has given us a moral and religious nature. He has given us faculties to apprehend moral and religious truth, and susceptibilities to be influenced and controlled by it; he has given us a divine revelation of truth and duty for our guidance and salvation; he has given us his Church, and the ordinances of his grace, and offers to give us the Holy Spirit in our hearts—and all this that we may be enlightened, renewed, converted, sanctified and saved; made

holy, and useful, and happy in this life, and prepared for the eternal glory in the life which is to come. The same law of use and increase, of non-use and forfeiture, which we have seen to prevail elsewhere, finds here its most intense and peculiar application.

Our religious powers and susceptibilities are peculiarly active and efficient in youth; and unless they be then improved they fall into decay; and if they be left unimproved until middle life, or old age, in every case they fall into an almost irreparable decay. Conversions become rare after forty, and at sixty or seventy are almost unknown. A man hardly sees two such examples in a lifetime. The few that are converted after middle life seldom are found among the brighter and better examples of Christianity. They seldom shine. Almost always do they bear the fatal marks of a past life of sin. On the contrary, the examples of those who neglected early piety, until they became an utter irretrievable moral ruin, are numerous and conspicuous in almost every community.

(*a*) They make a wreck of *conscience*. They neglect it, wound it, defy it, and it becomes hard, seared, defiled, perverted, until it calls evil good, and good evil, puts darkness for light, and light for darkness.

(*b*) They make a wreck of their *convictions;* convictions concerning sin, righteousness and judgment; concerning God, heaven and hell. These convictions, which all have, especially in youth, are stifled, resisted and destroyed. Little by little they die out

and vanish, and the soul is left in darkness and deadness, in unbelief, worldliness and sensuality. The day of grace passes, and the season of opportunity ends forever.

Some, on the other hand, cherish these convictions, yield to them, become true and happy Christians in the morning of their days, and thenceforth go on growing and increasing in all good forever.

(*c*) They lose all *self-control.* Some yield to tippling, gluttony, unchastity, and to all the sensual appetites, until all power of resistance is gone, and they are enslaved and lost. They yield to anger, revenge, malice, envy, and all the irascible and malignant passions, until they are overpowered and mastered by them. But those who mortify all these, and cherish the opposite graces, become more and more like Christ, attain to an everlasting inheritance of beauty and joy, and shine, and sing, and reign forever.

2. In addition to these moral and religious endowments and opportunities common to all, *God has to many given saving grace.* He has sent his Holy Spirit, convicting, converting, renewing and sanctifying them, and with this new-covenant relation and life, he has given *the capacity and the impulse to labor in the world for his glory, for the edification of the Church, and for the conversion and salvation of sinners.* He has given to each and all their gifts, talents, places and work.*

If we yield to this impulse, if we exercise our gifts and graces, they increase, and we become skill-

* Matthew xxiv. 45–51; xxv. 14–30.

ful in dealing with both saints and sinners in the matters pertaining to salvation. Our powers increase. With success new doors and larger fields open up to our efforts; new and larger labors give more experience, and skill, and strength; all who love God come to know us—their society, counsel and experience aid us and cheer us, and we become more hopeful, earnest, efficient and successful laborers in the kingdom and cause of Christ.

But if we check these impulses, and restrain our new-born energies, we soon lose those gifts and that power; we are awkward, and stiff, and weak, and inefficient; we grieve the Spirit; the locks of the young Samson never grow; we accomplish but little, and, as a consequence, must wear a starless crown in heaven; and often are doomed to go mourning here, uncertain of our state, harassed with fears and tormented with temptations we had otherwise escaped.

3. Thus it is with courage and decision. If we do not exercise them we lose them. If we yield to little temptations — tippling, worldly conformity, worldly conversation and calls on the Sabbath, bad thoughts—we must yield a little more and a little more, until all is gone. Give Satan an inch and he will demand an ell. If we resist promptly and decisively, our courage is confirmed. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*

4. Thus it is with the spirit of prayer. If we improve it we have more grace, more communion, more faith and assurance, more humble, holy bold-

* James iv. 7.

ness, more power. If we do not improve it, then we need expect no aid, no blessing; but strangeness and distrust, darkness, fear and unbelief—spiritual bankruptcy.

5. So with charity and all the graces. The more they are exercised, the more they grow; the less they are exercised, the less they grow.

THE END.

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